

A JOURNAL OF DESIRE ARMED

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On Social Democracy and Elections

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN, WHEN AFTER four (or eight) years, the presidential election becomes "the most important of our time." The clowns might be different, but the circus remains the same: filling vacancies on the Supreme Court, a rollback of abortion rights, foreign wars and targeted assassinations, the growing prison population, the expansion of the surveillance state... The campaigns of Trump and Sanders will surely be remembered as footnotes; the former is so buffoonish that even other Republicans can't help making fun of him, while the latter, a Socialist Jew, is obviously unelectable to the Executive Branch. Sure to be forgotten as well (at least until the next time) is



the excitement of a certain group of self-described anarchists who, every so often, throw aside what might generously be characterized as a half-hearted adherence to anarchist principles, and proudly embrace and exercise their rights as American citizens. To vote. Over the years, plenty of these part-time anarchists have chosen to engage in electoralism, but they have usually done so privately, not daring to try to convince anyone that such engagement furthers any anarchist vision or project.

It was bad enough that there was a Hope Bloc to greet Obama's 2009 inauguration; this time around we have to stomach the spectacle of anarchists being shills for a Social Democrat. Surprisingly — or not! — pro-Sanders anarchists have something of an actual history to draw on. Murray Bookchin (when he was still pretending to be an anarchist) was a Sanders booster from the days when the current senator was the mayor of Burlington,

Vermont; Sanders' tenure as an elected official may have been part of a real-world experience that contributed to Bookchin's municipal- and state-level pro-Green Party electoralist deviation.

A quick reminder: when anarchists use the term *direct action*, we mean any activity undertaken individually and/or collectively outside/against/without the use of elected or self-appointed representatives, especially those in government. Like all principles are supposed to be, the anarchist promotion of direct action is non-negotiable. One of the contributing factors to the definitive dissolution of the First International was a split over the electoralist strategy of Socialists; anarchists embraced direct action as an explicit rejection of legal politics. It doesn't necessarily mean breaking shit (although that can be part of it), but it doesn't mean volunteering to get arrested, and it certainly doesn't *ever* mean petitioning politicians to change policies or laws.

From the 1870s, most anarchists have not considered legality and parliamentarianism to be worthwhile strategic or tactical principles; when Socialists — who do — set up their Second International in 1889, they almost automatically excluded and/or ejected anarchists from it. Social Democracy, the ideology originating in the Second International, has different wings, from the electoral-fetishist, right-wing, non-Marxists all the way to the left-wing, insurrectionary, Marxist state capitalists (who eventually rejected the gradualism embodied in the Second and set up a Third International in 1919) more commonly known as Leninists. It's important to recall that all Leninists (and their various sectarian subgroups who worship Trotsky, Mao, Che, Ho, Stalin, ad nauseam) have showed themselves to be among the most implacable enemies of

authentically radical social change. For the last 100 years, from Mexico to Russia, from Germany to Spain, from Vietnam to Hungary and Cuba, social democrats have proudly presided over the slaughter of anarchists and other radicals who have promoted the non-hierarchical self-organization — aka, direct action — of working class and poor people.

There's no reason to think that Bernie Sanders would be any different.

A presidential election year could be a time to point out and decry the many deliberate inadequacies of what constitutes American-style democracy: the near-total focus on religious issues; self-appointed Super Delegates; the pro-slavery origins of the Electoral College; the continual erosion of the provisions in the Voting Rights Act; the inordinate focus on Swing States; the Citizens United decision; to say nothing of the absurdity of having a two-party system that refuses proportional representation... Instead, pro-Sanders anarchists acquiesce to the junior high school level, lowest common denominator, internally contradictory, mythology of one-person-one-vote majority rule, and the average citizen's (alleged) full participation in political decision making. That'll show the state!

Regular readers of this journal may find the observation unduly trite, but it bears repeating that most of what's wrong with American anarchists, especially the activist subcategory, is that a sizable segment remains committed to some form of Leftism. From being immersed in projects championing some vague notion of Social Justice™ to acting as unpaid social workers, too many American anarchists continue to wallow in the strategic mire of de

facto social democracy, constantly working to ameliorate the worst aspects of neoliberal post-industrial capitalism. This was seen most clearly in the various Occupy camps around the country; horizontally organized charities are still charities; eviction/foreclosure defense is predicated on the idea of private property; representation (with or without the famous mandated delegates) remains unchallenged. It's not that projects that provide food and shelter are useless or unhelpful; plenty of people otherwise unable to squeeze out a basic level of survival at the bottom of the capitalist pyramid certainly appreciate the help. But to pretend that these activities are the seeds of the new inside the shell of the old is a delusion. Like voting. Most of the organizational structures and decision-making processes in such projects tend to mirror the worst aspects of virtually all varieties of the Left, like paternalism, bureaucratism, and institutionalized authoritarianism.

Electoralism, as an integral aspect of good citizenship, can't be separated from this. Perhaps there's some alluring residue of the patriotism left over from those junior high school civics classes, some form of loyalty to the whole "right of petition for the redress of grievances" thing. For whatever reason(s), too many anarchists continue to harbor illusions about the responsiveness of the duly elected legal representatives of the citizens of the United States; that's why they still organize and participate in demand-based protest, justified by rights-based discourse. Shamefully, too many anarchists can't seem to resist the temptation of propping up political parties espousing moderate progress within the bounds of the law. (A)



cover photo by John Heylin

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Inside Anarchy

WELCOME TO ISSUE 77! THINGS CONTINUE to change at *Ajoda*, some minor and incremental, others more obvious but still perhaps not so visible. Our list of subscribers continues to shrink; as this is our most consistent source of financial support, we have to dip into our personal reserves to maintain the project. We are determined to avoid the ways of other projects, refusing to grovel for crowd-sourcing or some other form of what Maoists like to call revolutionary taxation (that's what university library subscriptions are for, hint hint). Which is not to say that we don't appreciate donations above what we have to charge for subscriptions... Speaking of subscriptions, Lawrence recently changed from a PC to a Mac, and the flashdrive with the ancient database had to be reformatted (thanks to former co-editor Aragorn! for the invaluable assistance). It was a painful process, and some of the data may have been lost; if you have any problems with your subscription, please let us know immediately. Despite continuing to suffer from the rise in postage costs even as services wane, we haven't raised our prices this year, so it's a good time to renew or start a sub.

Since "Against Identity Politics" was published last year, thoughtful readers have forwarded essays and commentaries, but "From Jenner to Dolezal: One Trans Good, the Other, Not So Much" (commondreams.org/views/2015/06/15/jenner-dolezal-one-trans-good-other-not-so-much) by Adolph Reed, Jr, professor of Political Science at UPenn, was without a doubt the most provocative. Despite the just under the surface Marxism, we still heartily recommend it for those readers who want to expand their understandings of how gender and race (as well as other categories of identity) are subjective, performative, fictive, real, and enforced.

Congratulations to the *Fifth Estate*, who last year marked their 50th anniversary of continuous publication. At the same time, we saw the final demise of the venerable London-based *Freedom*; even though we ceased to be

that interested in its contents over the past two decades, as print fetishists, we were sad to see a century-old project fold.

In the essay section, Uri Gordon reminds us that an analysis of the functions of any particular state is supposed to be foundational to an anarchist perspective, while Frank Love and Lawrence take a look at the rhetorical invocation of the 20th century state's ultimate manifestation of evil: fascism. Interestingly enough, current usage of the term is almost always divorced from any kind of statecraft. In the two contributions in this issue, the offenders are specific individuals (and possibly their friends/enablers). In such a non-statist context, it's difficult to discern imminent danger to anarchists (or anyone else) based on the writings of Exile and Michael Schmidt. There is an actual history of anti-anarchist violence connected to fascism; the accusations under scrutiny here, while important to examine, are – so far at least – only about opinions. Those opinions are unquestionably beyond a general understanding of anarchist theory and history, but the reactions Frank and Lawrence are scrutinizing have more than a little in common with the paranoid outbursts of Stalinists in the 1930s, who saw wreckers, saboteurs, and agents of the Mikado everywhere they looked.

With this issue, we are opening up what we hope will be a continued serious discussion of fiction. Richard Godwin offers a brief survey of his favorite influences on the topic of crime, surely more interesting than the conference announced in our Embarrassments. Also, perhaps surprisingly to our regular readers, John Henri and Elle Dee have written novels, excerpts of which we reproduce here to give you a taste of another facet of the editorial crew. Lawrence was also involved in a side project with our friends at Little Black Cart; the result is *Art as Resistance*, a history of the German autonomous antifascist scene and the aesthetic that came to define it in the 1980s and '90s.

We are once again proud to bring you another issue. **A**

On Resonance, Resistance, and Minor Compositions

Imaginal Machines: Autonomy and Self-Organization in the Revolution of Everyday Life

by Stephen Shukaitis

Minor Compositions, 2009
256 pages, paper. \$16.

~ and ~

Precarious Rhapsody: Semiocapitalism and the Pathologies of Post-Alpha Generation

by Franco "Bifo" Berardi

edited by Erik Empson

and Stephen Shukaitis

Translated by Arianna Bove,
Michael Goddard, Giusppina Mecchia,
Antonella Schintu, and Steve Wright

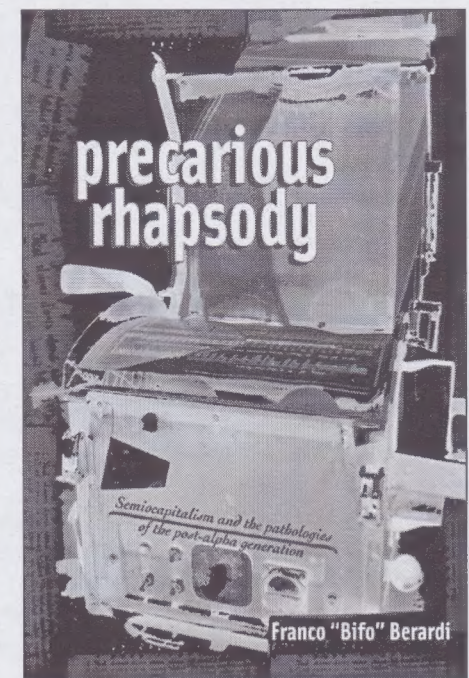
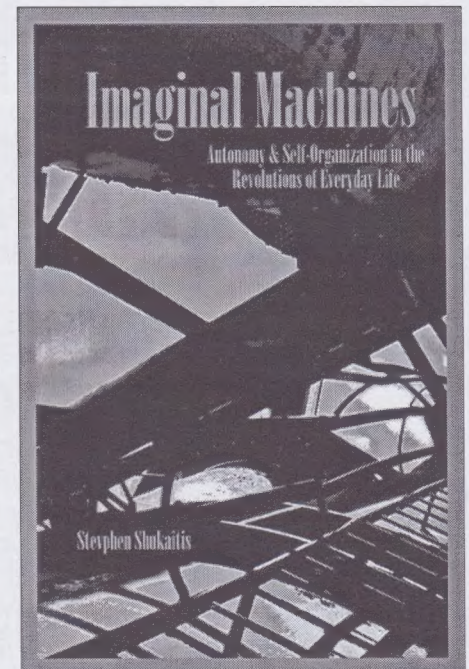
Minor Compositions, 2009
154 pages, paper. \$15.

Review by Jason Rodgers

THE WORLD HAS BECOME GLOBALIZED, forming an interlocking network of domination; the totality. This is not a singular system, not a monolithic conspiracy. Instead it is numerous structures interlocking, a reiterating feedback system. Electronic communication systems, media bombardment, and traditional forms of militaristic domination are mutually reinforcing. One doesn't have to be a Situationist to see that threats to this totality are often recuperated, used to make it stronger. Those who desire liberation are outgunned and overpowered. The situation calls for new tactics; this is called asymmetrical warfare. The only way to win is to adopt nonstandard tactics.

Stephen Shukaitis' *Imaginal Machines* is a sprawling text with little in the way of unifying thesis. Instead, it contains numerous concepts and themes which are explored and played with throughout. Of these, the concept which is most interesting to me is the *minor composition*. The concept is inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor literature: texts which use language in a way to subvert the dominant form. Minor literature is like a sprawling web that does not present an authoritative or authoritarian message. Shukaitis applies this concept of literature to a larger compositional model, to any sort of cultural production. These are cultural creations which are intended to be active in the social realm, yet not in a totalitarian manner. It does not intend to create massive hierarchic communication, replicating the structure of hegemony. Instead, the minor composition encourages change on the micropolitical level, in which individuals are not asked to be followers, but instead to be autonomous conspirators.

This concept is intended to be an active form, one that is "a politics not based on the representation of a people, but rather their creation, and more particularly on a creation which attempts to elude being fixed within a major form." The minor composition is a nomadic form that shifts as necessary to defend itself against recuperation. Rather than present a stable image of a particular group, it is a process by which individuals can create individual pieces and projects, having an interplay, possibly helping to form a social project. One manner in which this critique of representation is brought into practice is the use of the notion of détournement. Minor compositions can



take the form of "a process of collective composition through the reworking of forms within a dominant, or major form, without seeking to become the hegemonic form" (65). Aspects of the major form are détourned, becoming both an attack upon the major form and a context that makes some sense to outsider.

The constant barrage of images produced by the overwhelming, media-saturated world can be resisted through reappropriating them and inverting them.

Since the minor composition does not strive to become a major composition, a component of mass media, or a new hegemony, tactics of invisibility are adopted. "Sometimes clandestine struggles do not necessarily have to aspire to become something else, but can remain so because it makes sense compositionally for them to do so" (211). Within mass culture the insurrectionist and radical is outnumbered and overpowered. Instead of confronting these situations directly, it is probably more useful to work on a different level, in order to deal with this asymmetrical situation. Rather than become a fixed mass formation, a subterranean project can remain flexible and dynamic. These are not merely individual isolated activities, but rather "connect with much longer traditions of refusal, exodus, and escape" (65). This relates to a notion of projectuality, which empowers them much further. "Anarchist projectuality" says Wolfi Landstreicher, "is the practical recognition in one's life that anarchy is not just an aim for the distant future, an ideal that we hope to experience in a far away utopia. Much more essentially, it is a way of confronting life and struggle, a way that puts us at odds with the world as it is. It is grasping our own lives as a weapon and as a stake to be played against the existence that has been imposed on us."¹ Through the notion of projectuality, isolated actions in one's life can be placed within a larger project of refusal and struggle.

Often it is assumed that working through modes such as the minor composition is an act of desperation. It is treated as if working on a micropolitical level is what one does when they cannot work on a mass scale. After all,

who wouldn't want to reach the masses? Actually, there exists something of a tradition of viewing the mass scale actions and organizing as destructive in and of itself. One example is the anonymous pamphlet "Anti-Mass: Methods of Organization for Collectives,"² which appeared around 1970 or 1971. This is not considered a famous period piece because it never sought the attention of the mass media. The pamphlet asks the question "Really, how do you fight fire? With water, of course. The same goes for revolution. We don't fight the

the example of the collective should hopefully inspire others to form their own collectives, to take action. The mass model itself is portrayed as a destructive force, the authors believing it to "reveal how dependent they are on the glamour of mass politics. Everyone wants to project themselves on the screen of revolution... Having internalized the mass, they ask themselves questions whose answers seem logical in its own context" (p. 5). Instead, "changing social relations is a process rather than a product of revolution. In other words, you make the

the minor composition encourages change on the micropolitical level, in which individuals are not asked to be followers, but instead to be autonomous conspirators, empowering the individual to participate in a collective social process rather than adopt the role of a leader or follower

mass (market) with a mass (movement). We fight mass with class" (p. 1). This pamphlet is arguing that organizing a mass movement is actually perpetuating the mass society that is being resisted. Instead, it encourages working intensively on a small scale using a collective form. These collectives should be self-contained, but easily reproducible. The authors argue "The basic idea is to reproduce the collective, not expand it... Once you think in terms of recruiting, you might as well join the Army" (p. 3). Or put more bluntly, "organizing yourselves, not somebody else" (p. 2). Instead,

revolution by actually changing social relations. You must consciously create the contradictions of history" (p. 2). This empowers the individual to participate in a collective social process rather than adopt the role of a leader or follower. This tactic helps to combat the replication of structures of domination, such as a hierarchy of leaders and followers (or masters and slaves) within resistance groups. Not to believe that these structures are internalized in some way strikes me as naive.

The modes and methods by which ideas are transmitted are as important as the ideas themselves. The medium is a structural agent which creates an interplay between the message and viewer. It is not neutral. The minor composition employs a strategy of creating ruptures and breaks in hegemony, opening up new

¹ *Willful Disobedience*. Ardent Press, 2009; p. 223

² ed note: this text was written by the Red Sunshine Gang in 1971. Available at theanarchistlibrary.org/library/the-red-sunshine-gang-anti-mass

space, rather than simply staying within the most popular arenas.

One cannot assume that there is an already existing public sphere, an existing arrangement of bodies, ready to receive information conveyed through an artistic composition. Relying on the expected aesthetic of propaganda means circumscribing possible patterns of politics not just by its content, but also by the ways in which it is designed to work with or against the predetermined forms of circulation of ideas, images, and relations. (106)

Compositions should take into account these forms of circulation and work to disrupt them or use them as leverage points. Merely working in an alternative form, however, does not assure that the communication is radical. Shukaitis points out that “forms of street art do not derive their subversiveness simply from the fact that they occur on the street (which can also include a whole range of viral marketing and quotidian forms of spectacular recuperation), but rather from unfolding the relations that avoid the overcoding operations of the art institution and commodity production. It is this focus on patterns of circulation and relations as a politico-aesthetic activity... that compromises the process of affective composition” (106). Recuperation takes place not only by bringing the alternative into the dominant, but also by occupying alternative structures.

Aesthetic creations are often dismissed as irrelevant, or worse, “lifestylist.” This is problematic in a number of ways. The most obvious is that people can engage in a multitude of activities. Just because one does graphic art or music doesn’t mean that one can’t engage in other projects, such as food distribution. “Ironically this is part of the same process of separating radical aesthetics from social movements and the construction of imaginal machines more generally, a process facilitating their individuation

and recuperation, which is then both the cause and the symptom of a self reinforcing cycle” (111). The means by which communication occurs should be radical, politicizing aesthetics. The

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current divorce helps to aestheticize politics. Walter Benjamin argued, in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” that Fascism is on some level an aesthetic phenomenon. Benjamin wrote “Its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destructions as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order. This is the situation of politics which Fascism

is rendering aesthetic. Communism responds by politicizing art.”³ What Benjamin suggests as a method of Communist resistance works even better as a method of anarchist resistance.

I would like to think a continuous effort on an invisible level over time has a mounting influence. There is some evidence of this; in the history of warfare, there are numerous cases in which guerilla tactics have proven successful. By dealing with the struggles faced in everyday life in an insurrectional manner, the structures of domination are broken down. Something of a utopian view is required to make this effective, though the reification of utopia is a threat. To counter this, a surrealist and fantastic view of utopia may be useful. “Utopian dreams and models, rather than being stated and fixed models to impose, have often acted as inspiration for finding micropolitical modes of intervention, which is to say that they have often been connected rather than mutually exclusive” (107). The seemingly unrealistic dream provides a better model than a reformist position, because it provides a greater challenge to accepted notions. It is able to have reverberations we may not even perceive. The attack upon the totality occurs on the level of everyday life, the micropolitical. To attack on the macro level requires adopting totalitarian methods to deal with the totality. At this point, recuperation is already half-complete. Instead, resistance requires continuous struggle. “Affective resistance does not proceed by making a giant leap through which all existing dynamics that one could wish to do away with are magically dispersed forever more” (161).

I can’t help but think of sigils, as found in chaos magick. In this technique, one writes out a statement of intent (what you want the spell to accomplish), eliminates

3 *Illuminations*. Schocken, 1968; p.242

repeated letters, forms an abstract symbol by combining these letters and activates the sigil (often by masturbating to it). Sigils work on a principle of resonance, "they stimulate the will to work subconsciously."⁴ It does not work on a conscious and perceivable level. I am also reminded of the Sufi concept of fermenting wine, putting together elements in a condition in which they can unfold on their own. Within each there is a notion that a well-directed action on a micro scale can produce reiterations that form massive change over time. Rather than directly confronting an overpowering situation, strategic leverage is applied.

The Situationist International adopted similar positions and methodology. Shukaitis explores this, stating

The SI's response to their concern with recuperation was that their ideas were slowly finding their ways into everyone's heads, but through the submerged infrapolitics and everyday resistance and networks of communication. In other words, the Situationists developed a model of resistance based on submerged networks of invisible connections that would elude the constantly becoming-image of capitalist development and its ability to integrate forms of resistance to its image array. (194)

These submerged networks minimize recuperation, allowing the forms of resistance to maintain their subversive character. The modes remain powerful and can have a much greater communicative ability than mass forms, working on a different level. The Lettriste International, the precursor to the Situationist International, distributed their journal in a haphazard manner, claiming, "Some readers have been chosen arbitrarily." When Greil Marcus asked Gil Wolman if they "picked names out of a phone book," Wolman reportedly responded "Let's not exaggerate, we



didn't have a phone book. For that matter we didn't have a phone."⁵

Power is no longer an easily isolated, separate entity; it is no longer merely a king. Instead, techniques of control and discipline have been implemented on all levels of life, from the media to the world of work. The society of control is everywhere. If tactics of resistance replicated hegemony, then it could be possible that they are helping the society of control to expand further. A different strategy needs to be developed. Each individual has the capacity of creating their own minor composition, which can connect

with other minor compositions on the basis of affinity. Ideally, this would not mean merely that it is easy to create or encourage the lowest in human beings. Instead, individuals should be brought to the level in which they can accomplish amazing things. This could be thought of as a process of self-overcoming, or the creation of masters without slaves.

Machines, Work, and Semiocapitalism

In *Precarious Rhapsody*, Franco "Bifo" Berardi introduces the notion of semiocapitalism to explain the technological and media economy identified above as the totality. Berardi came out of the

⁴ Peter Carroll, *Liber Null & Psychonaut*. Weiser, 1987; p. 20

⁵ *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*. Harvard, 1989; p. 391

Italian Autonomia movement, and was a founder of the famous pirate radio station, Radio Alice. In *Precarious Rhapsody* he examines developments in capitalism and systems of control, exploring areas such as recuperation of radical struggles and how technological systems can function as mechanisms of domination.

Semiocapitalism is the integration of capitalism and sign production through electronic communication and information technology. The theory of semiocapitalism takes advantage of concepts developed by postmodern theory, while discarding the hip cynicism characteristic of much of it. At its best, PoMo theory provides important insights into conditions of late capitalism, yet at the same time, very often includes the notion that nothing can be done about these conditions — or worse, that they are positive. While I am certainly not one to mourn the death of modernism, developments in capitalism are certainly not the dawn of a new era.

Berardi characterizes semiocapitalism as “the new regime characterized by the fusion of media and capital. In this sphere, poetry meets advertising and scientific thought meets the enterprise” (18). It is an open secret that capitalism no longer manufactures actual goods, but symbols and mythologies to be attached to interchangeable commodities. The commodities are rarely valuable in themselves; now the logo branded on the good is the source of value. In semiocapitalism, the form of production that is created is “specifically semiotic; an infantile excess of signs circulates in the info-sphere and saturates individual and collective attention” (108).

The information economy is one way in which this can be propagated. As more of the social realm is characterized through economics, everyday life becomes progressively more controlled, more of life is viewed as a commodity. James Carey argued, “If knowledge is viewed as a commodity, as something that can be possessed and distributed,

then it too can be monopolized.”⁶ Monopolization can be hidden, though, as semiotic commodities are controlled, but no longer scarce.

Aside from the excess of signs generated by professionals for consumers, there is also the bizarre situation in which companies become rich by circulating amateur signs; consumers are consuming their own signs through the filter of Facebook and YouTube. Consumption and production are seemingly integrated. Still, the corporations

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control the means of production and distribution. There is a total lack of autonomy within this “crowdsourcing.”

Neoconservative futurists provided the model for this economy. Folks like Alvin Toffler wrote numerous tomes detailing the radical changes society was undergoing, changes that were very reactionary in nature, despite the futurist flourished embellishing them. Lee Siegel presented the problem of futurism clearly when

he wrote “But we know what a ‘producer public’ will look like. Alvin Toffler described it thirty years ago. It will look like a totalized ‘consumerist’ society, where everyone’s spare moment is on the market and where journalists in the blogosphere will have their every word quantified and evaluated by vigilant advertisers. Where ‘producers’ are simply consumers made more dependent on the marketplace by the illusion of greater participation in the marketplace.”⁷ We now live in a cybernetic economy and more of our lives are engulfed.

The ability to command and control from a distance is a crucial component of late capitalism. Sweatshops are remotely controlled. The home becomes a labor site. This is only possible due to electronic communication systems which allow management at a distance. This is a principle of cybernetics, possibly the most authoritarian of sciences. This is a structural component of computers, which Neil Postman differentiated from other machines by stating “Unlike most machines, computers do no work; they direct work.”⁸ Electronic communication systems are heavily integrated with industry, which “opened the way for the creation of a global network info-production, deterritorialized, delocated, depersonalized. The subject of work can be increasingly identified with the creation of global of info-production” (78).

The focus of labor in semiocapitalism has shifted to info-labor, “the provision of time for the elaboration and the recombination of segments of info-commodities” (32). Class structures have shifted as well. Berardi states that, “The dynamics of neoliberalism have destroyed the bourgeoisie and replaced it with two distinct and opposing classes: the cognitariat on the one hand, i.e. the precarious and cellularized labor of intelligence, and the managerial class on the other, whose only

⁶ *Communications as Culture*. Routledge, 1988; p. 167

⁷ *Against the Machine*. Spiegel and Grau, 2008; p. 128

⁸ *Technopoly*. Vintage, 1993; p. 115

competence is in competitiveness" (52). The proletariat is no longer merely the manual laborer, though they still persist. Now there is a whole subclass of tedious intellectual labor, the most obvious being jobs such as data entry (though it is by no means limited to that). These are jobs that hold the illusion of an opportunity.

The libertarian pretenses of the new economy are shown more and more by be equally illusory. Lee Siegel placed computer culture within the context of recuperation: "Web culture is the final stage in a long, slow assimilation of subversive values to conventional society. With the advent of the Internet, business culture has now strangely become identified with untrammelled mental and spiritual freedom — a freedom once defined by its independence from the commercial realm" (p. 34). Even the term libertarian has been recuperated. Where libertarian was once a synonym for anarchist or anti-authoritarian, it now is associated with free-market economics. The free-market program has proven to be far from liberating: "reality showed that the big groups of command operate in a way that is far from being libertarian, but instead introduces technological automatisms, imposing itself with the power of the media or money and finally shamelessly robbing the mass of share holders and cognitive labor" (79). This dissection of the production process allows individuals a high level of specialization, allowing a division of labor previously unheard of. Each person works on such a small aspect of the whole that the totality is easily ignored. The libertarian notion of the new economy has shown itself as merely another semiotic mask. Information does not want to be free, nor does it want the cognitariat to be free. Cybernetics is the theory of control. Whatever marginal shakeup the new economy caused, it has long since been reintegrated into the totality (and most of the shakeup was illusory to begin with).

This division of labor puts cognitarians into a position where their labor can be broken down to the point where only

the most productive aspects are paid for. Notions like freelance work allow an illusion of dignity. Actually though it just further relieves capitalism of any responsibility. "Capital no longer recruits people, but buys packets of time, separated from their interchangeable and occasional bearers" (32). The growing array of digital gadgets expands labor,

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while further slicing up what constitutes wage work. Massive portions of labor have been pushed into shadow work. This expands division of labor, "the extension of time is meticulously cellularized: cells of productive time can be mobilized in punctual, casual and fragmentary forms. The recombination of these fragments is automatically realized in the network" (33). Compare this to the factory system,

of which Wolfi Landstreicher said "The factory system — this integration of techniques, machines, tools, people and resources that is technology as we know it — was developed as a means of controlling the most volatile part of the production process — the human worker. The factory is in fact set up like a huge machine with each part — including the human parts — integrally interconnected with each other part" (p. 193). The cognitariat is augmented with consumer goods that integrate them with the economic system. Take the cell phone. "The mobile phone is the tool that makes possible the connection between the needs of semicapitalism and the mobilization of the living labor of cyberspace. The ringtone of the mobile phone calls the workers to reconnect their abstract time to the reticular flux" (33). The cellphone is a required tool for much of contemporary employment. Laborers are expected to check their e-mail during leisure time. Labor engulfs life, as the cognitariat becomes a component for the flow of semiotic content. The worker is forced to do unpaid work if they want to get ahead. Those who do get ahead can be looked at as evidence of the necessity of uncompensated work, while it is ignored by those who are left behind also engage in this unpaid work.

These processes have far reaching ramifications. Bifo argues:

The acceleration of information exchange has produced and is producing an effect of a pathological type on the individual human mind and even more on the collective mind. Individual are not in a position to consciously process the immense and always growing mass of information that enters their computers, their cell phones, their television screens, their electronic diaries and their heads. However, it seems indispensable to follow, recognize, evaluate, process all this information if you want to be efficient, competitive, victorious. The practice of multitasking, the opening of a window of hypertextual attention, the passage from one context to another for the complex evaluation of

processes, tends to deform the sequential modality of mental processing. (40)

The technologies of work, education and entertainment consolidate into one interlocking system. The hypertextual form is one that encourages shallow readings, discouraging introspection; it encourages a flowing on the surface. New technologies render old technologies obsolete. They also render human qualities obsolete. No one is obviously forced;

stream of particles.”⁹ This results in a sort of hyper-skimming, in which rather than concentrating on the text, the reader (or viewer) scans through it quickly in search of what is perceived as relevant. The actions a person most regularly engages in tend to be imprinted on one’s mind. Certain actions seem to imprint in particularly dramatic manner and “the Net delivers precisely the kind of sensory and cognitive stimuli — repetitive, intensive, interactive, addictive — that have been

out and the mass of present information tends to occupy the whole space of attention. The greater the density of the info-sphere, the scarcer is the time available for memorization. The briefer the mind’s lapse of exposure to a single piece of information, the more tenuous will be the trace left by this information” (88). A constant bombardment of stimuli means that the stimuli cannot be processed, that the information is too fleeting to process. These are ahistorical times, when a historical consciousness is rendered irrelevant. At best, historical consciousness is considered quaint, at worst freakish, even pathological. As former *Processed World* commander Chris Carlsson called it, we live in a “Nowtopia.”¹⁰

The bombardment of information “brings with it a crisis of the faculty of verbalization that manifest itself in various forms: autism and the dizzying escalation of dyslexia in the youngest generations, particularly in the social and professional classes most involved in the new technologies of communication” (87). This seems to be highly damaging to our interpersonal relationships as well as our inner lives:

the answer to the problems that have been raised is not to retreat, as if there could be an escape from this expansive system. It is also not possible to change the system from inside, which leads merely to recuperation. Rather, it becomes necessary to create invisible networks of resistance, with mobile tactics

instead, the previous mode is rendered irrelevant.

While the digital device can theoretically move at a nearly infinite speed, humans cannot. Thus, Berardi argues, “Human being tend to become ruthless executors of decisions taken without attention” (41). Humans adapt to their environment as necessary for survival. Introspection and depth awareness delay response, which is no longer acceptable in a world of instant feedback, where even e-mail is said to be too slow for the young. This is a far reaching transformation. Nicholas Carr explored this; he looked at the shifts in thinking the internet is creating. “And what the Net seems to be doing is chipping away my capacity for concentration and contemplation. Whether I’m online or not, my mind now expects to take in information the way the Net distributes it: in a swiftly moving

shown to result in strong and rapid alterations in brain circuits and functions” (p 116). This results in long term modification in the workings of cognitive processes. Carr explains: “The information flowing into our working memory at any given moment is called our ‘cognitive load.’ When the load exceeds our mind’s ability to store and process the information — when the water overflows the thimble — we’re unable to retain the information or to draw connection with the information already stored in our long-term memory. We can’t translate the new information into schemas” (p. 125)

Information overload leads to shifts in all of our cognitive processes. Berardi describes how the “memory of past thins

Spheres of relationality and behavior that require an extended period of attention such as those of effectivity, eroticism and deep comprehension, are disturbed, subject to a contraction. In these conditions of acceleration and information overload, automatism tends to become the prevalent form of reaction to stimuli, in the sense that automatic reactions are those that don’t demand reflection of conscious and emotional reaction. They are standard reactions, implicit in the pre-formatted chain of actions and reaction of the homogenized info-sphere. (89)

Humans become more robotized in this environment. Shells and character armoring are adopted, eventually to the point of

9 *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*. Norton, 2010; p 7-8

10 AK Press, 2008

integration. It is no wonder that, as this stage of capitalism was beginning, Phillip K. Dick wrote science fiction novels in which robots were often figures of terror; the ultimate terror was the comprehension that one was not human at all, but a robot. When cyberculture was first reaching a mass audience, Mark Dery discussed the popularity of *Star Trek* Borg costumes, stating "their cultish following bespeaks a pervasive desire among sci-fi readers, *Star Trek* fans, and other members of fringe technoculture to sheath the body in an impenetrable carapace, render it invincible through mechatronic augmentation — a hypostatization, perhaps, of a creeping body-loathing congruent with the growing awareness that wires are twined through all of our lives, that our collective future is written on confetti-sized flakes of silicon."¹¹

The answer to the problems that that been raised is not to retreat, as if there could be an escape from this expansive system. It is also not possible to change the system from inside, which leads merely to recuperation. Rather, it becomes necessary to create invisible networks of resistance, with mobile tactics. Disentangle from the system, while still attacking it. Anti-media campaigns appear more and more relevant; adopting tactics to cut flows of images; build autonomous and alternative means of communication; twist the pressure point of the semiotic control system (through techniques such as *détournement*). Confrontation with systems of control and networks of domination are the most likely tactic of success. These confrontations cannot take the form of head-on militaristic conflict, as glamorized by Maoist vanguard types, without replicating the very systems of domination they intend to defeat. Instead, alternative forms of guerrilla ontology, psychic nomadism, and asymmetrical tactics offer the greatest potential. (A)

11 "Flame Wars," in *Flame Wars*. Ed. Mark Dery. Durham/London: Duke University, 1994; p. 6

HICKS SPENT SOME TIME AMONGST THE RENOWNED Missouri River Pirates, a loose-knit group of itinerant printers. One of the early Missouri River Pirates was "Judge" Grigsby. "He was dressed in a frock coat, white waistcoat, striped trousers, immaculate linen and patent-leather shoes — all topped by a silk hat. He was one of the most picturesque of the old tourist printers" who preferred to travel on foot than on rail, in keeping "with his philosophy of a leisurely and gracious manner of spending one's life. As we walked along, he told me something of his theory of life: To live fully and richly, to acquire the greatest delight for the mind in the joys of intellectual curiosity. He would study, he said, the text of nature and the book of life, learning from things about him. He quoted Rousseau to the effect that the only way to travel was on foot while one reveled in the freshness and harmony beside the little streams. Railroads and steamboats, he said, had robbed the pilgrimages of journeymen workers of their poetry, thereby shortening their journey of life."

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Bad English:
A History of Linguistic Aggravation
by Ammon Shea

(Perigree/Penguin Books, 2014)
\$24. Cloth.

Review by Lawrence Jarach

"The world is a hellish place, and bad writing is destroying the quality of our suffering. It cheapens and degrades the human experience, when it should inspire and elevate."

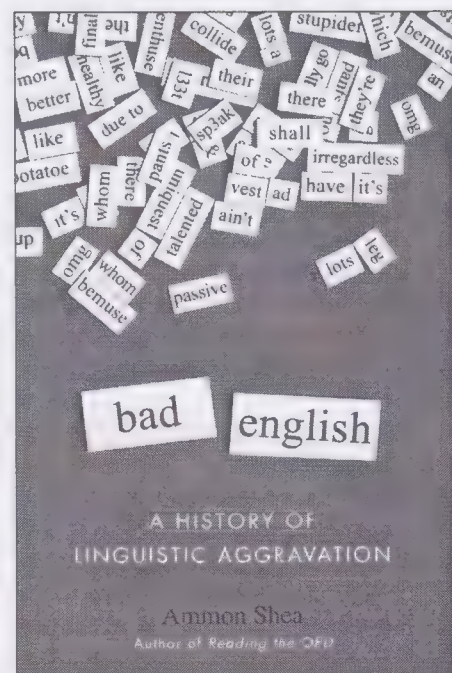
—Tom Waits

I'M A FAN OF LANGUAGE. EVEN WITHOUT the benefit of formal instruction, I am also a fan of grammar; aside from skimming bits from a couple of somber reference books and taking a linguistics seminar in college, for the most part I am an autodidact. The influence of my parents, one particular high school French teacher, and a couple of college professors has made me into a bit of a finger-wagger when it comes to what are generally considered grammatical errors (itself an interesting phrase, since — according to some other finger-waggers — if it's an error, then it can't be grammatical). As with many people who use and appreciate language, there are things that bug me, that look wrong, that sound strange, and that make me cringe. I savor usage guides designed for non-linguists whose authors can convey their grumpiness with humor, especially those sprinkled with heavy doses of satire. I was an instant admirer of *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*; Lynne Truss is convincing, and also very funny.¹

Grumpiness about language remains static even as the language evolves: "To

be sure, there are a number of things that most grammarians today agree are either right or wrong, but our language persists in changing" (71). Shea's history is an equal mix of raw data and scholarly investigation into those changes; much of it is fascinating even if the exact reasons/times/locations for the changes remain elusive. His research skills are formidable. There are also some laments in his history. The flexibility and resilience of English and the ability of writers to withstand the attacks of others who get annoyed by what they perceive as usage crimes is, for Shea, cause for relief, if not happiness. He observes that, "The second half of [the 18th century] saw a plague of grammar books and usage guides... Very few of the hundreds of such works were concerned with celebrating the beauty of the language..." (102). Shea wants us to celebrate that beauty with him, to find satisfaction in the continuity of English even as it changes, to rejoice in its enduring quality, and in the ability of writers to convey meaning and substance through their prose. It's noble and admirable, and I agree with him.

Broadly speaking, people who chart the evolution of language (not necessarily linguists, although they do it too) can be divided into two groups: those whom Shea labels "scolds," who write off everyone who dares to perpetuate the scold's particular peeve through an oral or written mis/ab/use, because it indicates an irreparable level of barbarism that can only be the result of monumental ignorance; and those like Shea, who are content to catalog the annoyances of others and remark on them non-judgmentally as examples of the evolution of English: "Many of us are still fixated on the idea that the English language was slowly but surely getting



better and better, improving itself with night classes and a good diet, but that at some recent point things took a dramatic turn for the worse. Relax. English is not dying. It is behaving exactly like it should, which is to say it is changing" (122).

DEPRAVED AND INSULTING ENGLISH is another of Shea's books I have on one of my many bookshelves. It contains a slew of words that are both amusing and naughty, but almost none of which is making a comeback, which, in some cases, is too bad.² Who wouldn't want to embellish their prose with an occasional *snurt* or *plooky*, or the judicious deployment of *empleado*, *blatherskite*, *misologist*, or *philodox*?³ As a chronicler of usage, both archaic and contemporary, Shea is more than competent; there's a palpable joy in his prose, which is often

contagious. There are many places where reading *Bad English* made me smile. Here's one, pulled at random:

[T]here are some poor unfortunates who committed such egregious language sins in a past life that they were reincarnated as high school composition teachers, and they have been heard to make the case for banning and at the beginning of a sentence... No one wants to read a book report that contains seventeen consecutive sentences beginning with and or any other word... As in many other cases, the desired results can be better effected by teaching students how to write better. (90)

As one who suffered through high school and college freshman composition classes, I feel for my own history as I do for that of my peers — especially those of us unlucky enough to have to carry around and almost memorize Strunk and White.⁴

That little book, a staple of higher education, is a horrid compilation of snobbery and impatience, far more suited to the era when it was first published (1920). Despite its often idiosyncratic nature, its reputation remains, incredibly, mostly unsullied by the passage of time and the many shifts in styles and tastes over the last century. Surely, the logic seems to be, a respected professor of English at an Ivy League university must have something important to say about good writing...

For most of my adult life, and for all of the time I've been a consciously self-identified anarchist, I have believed that the point of using language well is to make authentic communication possible — and that using language poorly unnecessarily impedes it. In that respect, I begin from the same premise as the writers of any English usage guide, including Strunk. Where things diverge is that I have also believed that true communication is more likely between and among equals. Plenty of anarchists (particularly those who assume an allegedly proletarian posture) dumb down their language;

my style of occasionally complicated prose is a reflection of my preference for helping to smarten up the realm of radical discourse. I have been drawn to clarity as well as using generally agreed-upon grammatical guidelines, but there's an inevitable tension involved, because most of those agreements are based on the preferences and ideas of people like Strunk: people in positions of wealth and power. Language usage is one field of contention in a wider conflict centered on maintaining class distinctions, and the university (especially the private university) is an important training ground for refining those distinctions.

sons (and the occasional daughter) of the ruling class to higher education created a situation where believers in the common sense mythology of American meritocracy, instead of resenting the ruling class for their economic (and political) power, tended instead to resent their access to education. This tradition of American populism often begins with a quasi-instinctive loathing and othering of high-achieving K-12 students, with insults deployed to champion intellectual divisions. The cultivation of curse words and forms of improper speech and writing was understood as proper masculine behavior. Boys like me who wanted to get

Shea's history is an equal mix of raw data and scholarly investigation; much of it is fascinating even if the exact reasons/times/locations for the changes remain elusive

Most American universities have traditionally been out of reach for almost anyone who wasn't already part of the ruling class.⁵ A continual filtering out of people without the requisite access to (and/or respect for) hereditary authority means that university-level education tends to be conservative rather than innovative; professors, deans, and regents are notoriously timid, accepting new ideas and methodologies at a glacial pace. Upper class bias still infuses these elite institutions, even those that are publicly funded.

Anti-intellectualism has deep roots in American culture, almost always pivoting on the issue of a college education and the use of intelligent language (though the two are not synonymous). Prior to the passage of the much-touted GI Bill at the end of the Second World War, the generations-long exclusive access of the

good grades and perform well in school were taunted and ridiculed — by other boys, and by many girls. The linguistic enforcement of gender roles wasn't guided by any visible adults; gender and class conformity, like racial prejudice, is first learned at home.⁶

DURING THE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH centuries, usage guides by language prudes often contained complaints about particular words and idiomatic phrases being "vulgar" — as if merely identifying them as such were adequate condemnation. To a person rich and/or powerful enough to have attended university, any hint of a vernacularism must seem "vulgar," and unworthy of being taken seriously, at least in "polite company" (a euphemism for *other rich/powerful people*). It should not be surprising that the ways English is taught/

enforced should be fraught with elite prejudices about what is proper and correct, with the self-appointed guardians of the language nearly paranoid about colloquial intrusions. When scolds refer to vulgarisms or slang, they are not condemning the evolution of written or spoken English; they are in fact condemning the people who spur on parts of that evolution through their lack of a housebreaking education.⁷ Vulgarisms (and it's worth noting that not all colloquialisms or vernacular expressions so labeled by language prudes are sexual) are often given the label because the idioms or slang are used by people associated with some kind of underclass, often consciously overlapping with categories infused with race bigotry: criminals, foreigners, sailors, and musicians.

No doubt to the horror of the upper-class guardians of some alleged purity of English, many innovations and creative borrowings (of foreign loan words as

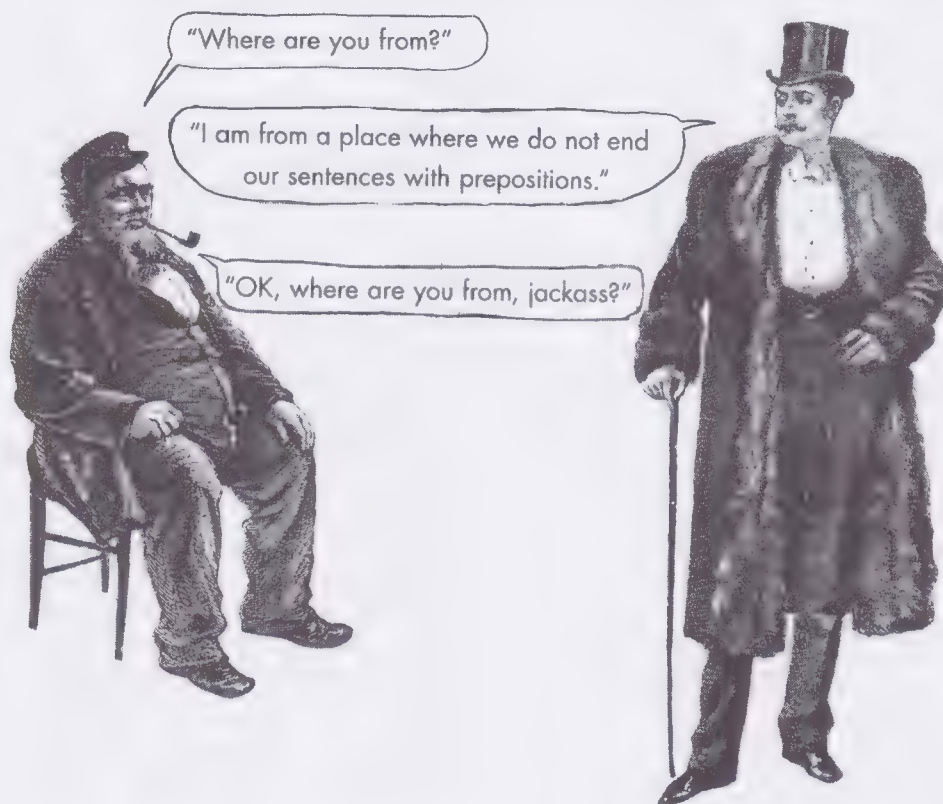
well as the alteration of meanings only understood by a specific subculture) eventually meander into non-vulgar contexts, especially through narrative accounts of people and adventures, newspaper reports of criminal trials, and the irresistible attraction of folk and popular music styles. There are also adoptions from cryptolects (deliberately constructed argot to confuse outsiders), like *raspberry* (a derisive vocal approximation of flatulence) from East End rhyming slang and *hoot* (meaning laugh) from Boontling, the vernacular from the northern California town of Boonville.⁸

LANGUAGE IS A TRICKY BIT OF TECHNOLOGY for anarchists, because in class-based, racially charged, patriarchal cultures like the ones most anarchists inhabit, allowable options of vocabulary have most often evolved to serve those with the most power and authority.⁹ This trap inheres in a culture that promotes

and rewards hierarchies; the rules and regulations that govern grammar and syntax are reflections of the rigid divisions and separations enforced by those who create and maintain hierarchical institutions for their own benefit. Scholars and students of language (linguists and grammarians, editors and writers) who ignore the deleterious influence of class, race, and gender domination on communication do so at the risk of helping to make language increasingly undescriptive, dull, and unpleasant.

Shea, for all his positive qualities as a writer, has unfortunately contributed to this trajectory. Taken on its own terms, *Bad English* is nothing more ambitious than an examination and cataloguing of some consistent peeves (some over a hundred years old, and still going strong) of writers, editors, and others — both famous and obscure — concerned with language; as an exemplary researcher (on intimate terms with the OED¹⁰) he has found the origins of many of the peeves that have passed down from teachers to students, from publishers to writers, from friends to peers. But just as is the case with virtually every other usage guide, the issue of how language reinforces hierarchy and domination remains a noticeable omission.

Usage guides are written by scholars and editors and writers with their own peeves — and enough time to write usage guides and, more importantly, publishers willing to print them. For the most part, these scolds are the products of what used to be called a classical education, meaning Eurocentric (if not Anglo-supremacist), and steeped in Latin and Greek. Many have tried to make English conform to Latin grammar, despite English being a broadly Germanic language (Shea outlines this in Chapter Six, "Defending English," where, if one replaces references to the English language with "whiteness," readers might — or might not — be surprised¹¹). Other than these specific challenges, the more general class prejudices, race prejudices, and gender prejudices of the dominant



culture all play a large part in what both-ers language scolds, and these prejudices often come through in their laments. The class barriers between the educated elite and the ignorant commoner are policed and constantly reinforced by people who pay attention to language and have the resources to make their complaints widely available. As Shea observes:

Linguistic pet peeves require two things in order to survive and flourish: *constant maintenance* and the blood of a freshly wounded language... According to those who sit up at night worrying about the state of our language, English has been headed to hell in a hand basket for a very long time. From the stubborn continuity of English, however, it seems clear that either (a) we are in an exceedingly slow hand basket or (b) the language will not break, no matter how willfully we mis-treat it. (ix-x; my emphasis)

This last observation leads Shea not to worry about “Words That Are Not Words” (Chapter 2) such as “belittle,” “balding,” “stupider,” and “irregardless.” That language peeves are very often matters of personal taste is clear, so while Shea finds abundant reasons to dismiss others’ objections to these monsters, I will continue to cringe when people write or say *irregardless* (even my spell-check recoils in horror). The obviousness of the double negative (which I’m not necessarily opposed to, but in a single word?) is enough of a reason for me to reject it. Some people find the word *hopefully* (2-7) to be abhorrent, while it doesn’t bother me at all. Similarly, *aggravate* (subtitle; 26-28) causes many of Shea’s scolds to wail in protest. The original meaning, “making worse,” predates other meanings by about 60 years (but older is not necessarily better, or more correct, just perhaps more widely accepted). I don’t find it irritating perhaps because I have my own theory as to why it’s become a synonym for *irritating*. I believe the eventual use of *aggravated* to mean annoyed or bothered is (perhaps phonetically) related to and derived from the word *aggrieved*; if a person who feels wronged

is “the aggrieved party,” then what might be the related term that would mean “the condition of being aggrieved”?

WORDS INFLUENCE THE WAY WE THINK about the things named.¹² Recognizing this is part of the reasoning behind using more descriptive words rather than ideologically and morally based terminology, especially since the latter tend to reinforce the dominant ideology and morality of capitalism and other institutional hierarchies. While the euphemistic

prescriptions and proscriptions (both linguistic and behavioral), and self-referential jargon (in this case, of social justice activists).¹⁴ I know what this phrase means, but since nobody I know has the ability to explain all of it satisfactorily, I’ve had to get at the meaning through several months of unwanted exposure to an unfortunately pervasive context, which has also led me to a somewhat cynical view of the code embedded in it.¹⁵ In an activist context, *ally* means someone who is required, as the price of

it should not be surprising that the ways English is taught/enforced should be fraught with elite prejudices about what is proper and correct, with the self-appointed guardians of the language nearly paranoid about colloquial intrusions

excesses of Politically Correct vocabulary are easy to mock, at base the logic is sound; if we refer to a person as *differently abled* or somehow *challenged* rather than “handicapped,” we are returning agency and subjectivity to that person rather than declaring her_him to be less-than-fully human, and therefore deserving of scorn and/or pity.

A serious drawback to this strategy is that the gatekeepers of PC vocabulary often get stuck in their own traps and dead-ends. Kristian Williams uses a particularly ugly phrase to illustrate the bad writing that results from this phenomenon: “To be allies, cisgendered people need to check their privilege.” Williams states that this sentence, “is, by contemporary anarchist standards, utterly unremarkable.”¹³ Yet clearly this sentence is overflowing with assumptions, moral

admission to supporting a self-appointed representative clique of an identifiably oppressed group, to remain silent about anything s_he might find uncomfortable about the analysis, strategies, and tactics of that clique; in addition, an *ally* must not mention anything having to do with her_his own possible oppression, as this would distract from the primary oppression of the individual/representative of an identifiably oppressed group. In other words, an *ally* is a person who has decided to be an uncritical supporter of someone else: “You can go through workshops and receive an allyship badge. In order to commodify struggle it must first be objectified. This is exhibited in how ‘issues’ are ‘framed’ and ‘branded.’ Where struggle is a commodity, allyship is currency. Ally has become an identity...”¹⁶

When I was hired as a freelance proof-reader for the San Francisco-based imprint of one of the larger English-language book

One of the most important concerned gender. The influence of feminism¹⁹ on English usage has troubled many writers and publishers at least since the mid-1970s, especially with regard to the allegedly inclusive terms *Man* and *Mankind* (we were instructed to use Human and Humanity), and the default use of masculine pronouns when referring to individuals of unmentioned gender and/or mixed-gender groups (we were told to use them sparingly, and to

In Shea's introduction, he champions the "gender-neutral *they*" (xiv) as a re-accepted (its use went out of style at the beginning of the 19th century) third person singular pronoun. I have to register my deep unhappiness with this. Aside from the fact that it still conveys plurality to me, *they* is more accurately a gender-ambiguous term, which actually obscures the problem of gendered words and the values attached to them; anarchists and other radicals should know that examples of so-called neutrality almost always indicate a default (and therefore unexamined) acceptance of the terms of institutions of domination and hierarchy. I would argue, then, that *they* actually retains the normative/dominant masculine assumptions of English,

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which therefore is not nearly enough of a challenge to the patriarchal nature of the language. And while I acknowledge that the issue of pronouns is important for how people prefer to understand themselves as individuals, the reclamation of *they* as singular, aside from being unconvincing, is neither attractive nor euphonic.²¹

Despite the humor in much of his writing, Shea's book becomes less entertaining when he moves his analysis into charting drifts in usage. Shea includes examples of errors and/or unpopular usages that are sure to annoy, enlighten, and intimidate, depending on the reader's tastes and loyalties. The problem is that he often acts as if each error or unpopular usage were equally uninteresting to anyone but a specialist in English. He seems to be trying to suggest that scolds back off, but at the same time it's almost as if he's trying to convince bad writers that they needn't worry too much about being scolded. This is unfortunate, and perhaps indicative of Shea's false populism. He is, after all, a consulting editor of American dictionaries for Oxford University Press (and I wonder if his position there is the reason for his notable omission of any reference to the *Chicago Manual*), which puts him in a *unique* (29-38) position to track the evolution of usage, and especially the changes in meaning over time.

I know he had to include it, and there was probably no better way to do it, but by the time I arrived at "221 Words That Were Once Frowned Upon" (Chapter Seven), I wasn't actually that interested any more. It's just a list of individual words, the writer who objected to it, and year of the objection. Without definitions, the entire chapter is devoid of the humor Shea began with, and that continued to dissipate the longer the book went on. Reading this list is more like reading and comparing Bierce's unappealing *Write it Right* to his hilarious *The Devil's Dictionary*; Bierce was quite witty and much of his century-old satire is remarkably enduring.²² The dry, archival

quality of Shea's final chapter differs substantially from all six preceding chapters, almost marking it as the work of someone else.

I AM AN EDITOR. I TAKE THE TASK seriously, but I hope (oops, I almost wrote *hopefully*) without the capriciousness that often flows from exerting control over others; I am always happy to explain each of my editorial decisions, with the expectation that those decisions can be discussed, and that I might actually be influenced to change my mind. Over the years, I have occasionally been complimented by contributors on my ability to condense their prose without interfering with their tone and meaning. I am gratified by this.

From inserting serial commas, to a near-obsession with removing quotation marks when a writer isn't actually quoting anyone (and *definitely* when s_he's trying to be ironic); from insisting on terminal punctuation remaining inside the end of a quotation, to condensing overly long sentences with the clever placement of a semicolon; from changing *that* to *who* or *whom* when an author refers to a person, to deleting hyphens as often as possible — I get to maintain my personal grammar preferences and usage quirks. Lucky me. [Ⓐ]

Endnotes

- 1 *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: A Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*, by Lynne Truss (Gotham/Penguin, 2003).
- 2 *Depraved and Insulting English*, by Peter Novobatzky and Ammon Shea (Harvest/Harcourt, 2001).
- 3 Respectively: ejecting mucus from the nose while sneezing; covered with pimples; a person overly eager to hold public office; a loudmouth; a person with a hatred of mental activity; and a person in love with her_his own opinions. I have happily noticed that, at least in some circles, *fopdoodle* seems to be enjoying something of a resurgence.
- 4 *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk and E. B. White (McMillan, 1959); originally (in 1918) a private 40-page in-house guide for use at Cornell University, most of us know it from the expanded 70-page edition.
- 5 A notable exception are those schools known as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), most of which were founded after the Civil War with the specific purpose of providing quality higher education.
- 6 My ability to perform well academically (and coincidentally not being that interested in athletics) led me to being constantly identified as a "faggot," an epithet shared with plenty of other boys, and that had little or nothing to do with a perception of any likely or actual sexual preference. Getting good grades was seen as effeminate and feminine; girls were always expected to get better grades than boys, and were also, in those ancient days before Title IX, actively discouraged from playing sports. Gender variance for girls also resulted in insults, but "tomboy" is not an invitation to harass or bully, and "dyke" was an unknown word during the time I was labeled a faggot.
- 7 This should not be read as an uncritical defense of government-sponsored and -enforced education. However, it seems to me that the increased acceptance of sloppiness in (especially written) English, the impossible criteria of No Child Left Behind, the increase of charter schools, and the popularity of stringent exit exams are all part of the same multipronged long-term ruling class strategy to fight against the perceived threat of social leveling represented by compulsory public education. Other observers, notably John Zerzan, see the slide toward illiteracy as an unconscious, but powerful, rebellion against class culture. I see official negligence toward what was once a vibrant public educational system as one of many fronts in the continual assault against rebellion — especially that fueled by the ability to think critically.
- 8 London-based rhyming slang is created by taking a word and identifying it with a two or three word phrase, then

dropping the one that rhymes, leaving behind an obscure crypto-synonym. The rhyming replacement for the derivative sound is *raspberry tart* (rhymes with tart): remove tart and it leaves *raspberry*. In Boontling *dukes* means fists, hence the expression “put up your dukes,” meaning *get ready for a fistfight*.

- 9 As much as I dislike quoting (especially disagreeable) authorities, I have to give credit to Marx and Engels when they observed that “The ideas of the ruling class are, in any age, the ruling ideas.” Anarchists say that state-sponsored institutions teach, reinforce, and reward the ideas, values, and moral codes of those in charge of the state.
- 10 His other work is *Reading the OED: One Man, One Year, 21,730 Pages* (Perigree, 2009).
- 11 Here's an example, with the appropriate illustrative alterations: “But he was not entirely correct — several of the [races] he thought were unnecessary... ended up working their way into [the white race]... A particularly common way of [countering] this has been to affirm the need of preserving ‘pure’ [whiteness], rather than [mixing with those of] Latin origins. One of the problems with attempting to enforce any sort of pure [whiteness] is the fact that so much of our [genetic makeup] does not come from [white] roots...” (164).
- 12 This is the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, “the idea that differences in the way languages encode cultural and cognitive categories affect the way people think...” (www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Sapir%E2%80%93Whorf_hypothesis.html).
- 13 *Anarchism and the English Language/English and the Anarchists' Language: an exchange between Kristian Williams and the CrimethInc. Writers' Bloc* (crimethinc.com/texts/recentfeatures/language.php). Despite the title, much of Williams' rant concerns the specialized vocabulary of the sub-group of activists rather

than the broader category of anarchists; even though I am drawn more to the CrimethInc. side in this exchange, his point about crappy writing stands.

- 14 An activist is an activist who believes in Doing Something (Anything) all the time, regardless of any particular relevance or (eventual) achievement; activists often explicitly reject discussion and/or theory about activism, dismissing such intellectual pursuits as a distraction from Getting Shit Done. Already a decade ago, Featherstone, Henwood, and Parenti, wrote: “We challenge left activists to become intellectuals. Ideas belong in the street, at work, in the home, at the bar, and on the barricades” (www.policyalmanac.org/publications/utne/beyond_activism.shtml). So far, their exhortation has not made many inroads...
- 15 An excellent, but all too brief, satirical examination (which uncovers the inherently hierarchical and authoritarian content of this specialized vocabulary) is Dot Matrix's “Breaking the Code: Rhetoric to Watch Out For” (*Ajoda* #62 [2006]; also at theanarchistlibrary.org/library/dot-matrix-breaking-the-code). Her definition of ally: “what someone calls themselves (or is called) to express a strong commitment to Someone Else's struggle, when Someone Else is seen to be more authentic than the ally. This status gives vicarious legitimacy to the statements of the ally, particularly when the ally is confirmed by a representative Someone Else”; her definition of *authentic*: “...implying that a certain group understands more about how the world works due to a particular social (oppressed) status, leading members of this group (and their allies) to believe that members of this group are more relevant to significant social change than others.”
- 16 “Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex; an Indigenous Perspective and Provocation” (Indigenous Action Media, www.indigenousaction.org, May 2014)

- 17 As an interesting exercise, Shea quotes 14 examples of lines either from the Bard or from hip-hop lyrics; these are the ones from Shakespeare: “The music, ho”; “Holla, holla!”; “Let's beat him before his whore”; “Welcome ass, Now let's have a catch”; “Never name her, child, if she be a whore”; “The money that you owe me for the chain”; and “Holla, ho! Curtis!” (228).
- 18 *The Chicago Manual of Style; The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers* (University of Chicago Press, 1982 [13th Edition]). The most current edition is the 16th, released in 2010.
- 19 In its most generic sense, the idea that women and girls are individual and collective agents in all spheres of public and private life, and should be treated accordingly; in the context of the printed word, the idea that anyone not integrated into patriarchy is acknowledged as her_his own subject. A critical examination of the many failures of late 19th and early 20th century Euro-American feminism is beyond the scope of this essay. Anarchists who rejected the label *feminist* during those years include Voltairine de Cleyre, Emma Goldman, and the militants of *Mujeres Libres*; contemporary critics include Lilith (theanarchistlibrary.org/authors/lilith), while post-structuralist and queer feminists have also contributed much to chew on. Parenthetically, the efforts made in the '70s and '80s toward referring to all adult females as *women* rather than *girls* have nearly disappeared with the attempted reclaiming (I remain unconvinced) of *girl* and *grrl* as terms of feminine power.
- 20 Part of the in-house style guide, in an explicit acknowledgment of the pervasiveness and persistence of racism, also included the insistence that *black* and *dark* not be used to convey negative ideas or objects; *extortion* was to replace blackmail, for example. Other terms that were to be avoided included *blacklist*, *blackball*, *blackguard*, *black sheep*, etc, despite many of them not

originally having a negative connotation. Significantly, the anarchist use of black is positive (except in a philosophical sense of anarchy being a largely negative project); the black flag has been consistently associated with anarchism since Louise Michel held one aloft in 1883 during a demonstration of the unemployed in Paris.

- 21 The go-arounds at the beginnings of activist meetings where people introduce themselves by name, political affiliation/project, and preferred gender pronoun is a bit much. Like using E-Prime (a form of English that prohibits any form of the verb *to be*, which, according to its advocates, influences its

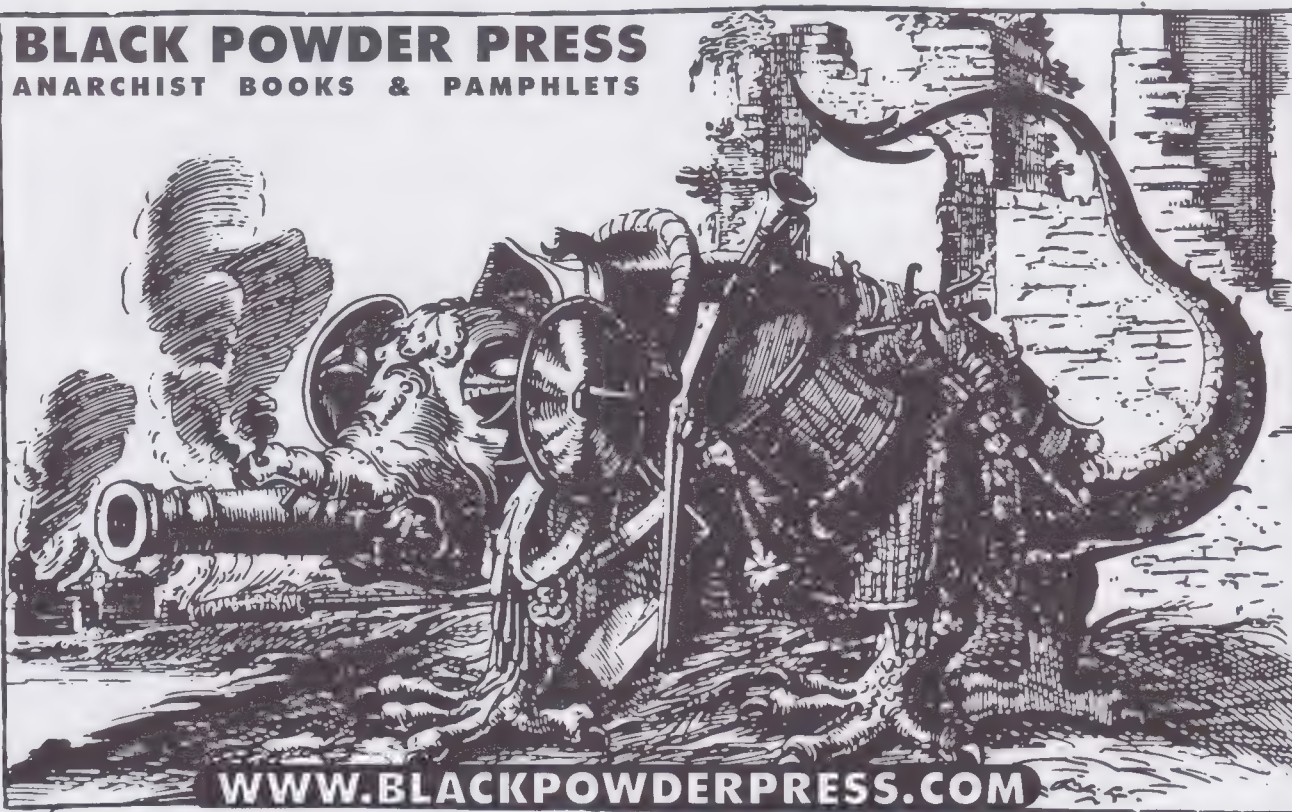
users to think more clearly and to communicate based on experience rather than dogma), I think a better option for provoking people to think beyond a strict gender binary could be an avoidance of pronouns; this might influence people to think and interact as if everyone had agency all the time. Some writers prefer to alternate feminine and masculine pronouns (sometimes within a single sentence, sometimes alternating in consecutive sentences); in the absence of a widespread acceptance of alternation or avoidance, we decided a few years ago to use the gender-queering construction *s_he/her_him* to (ahem) underscore that there are gender

identities that are not covered by feminine and masculine terms, pronouns included. Unfortunately, this cannot (yet) be conveyed verbally without some clumsiness.

- 22 Ambrose Bierce's *Write It Right: The Celebrated Cynic's Language Peeves Deciphered, Appraised, and Annotated for 21st-Century Readers* (annotated by Jan Freeman; Walker and Co., 2009) is actually quite dull. First published as a book in 1911, *The Devil's Dictionary* has gone through many editions and revisions. The most recent scholarly version is *The Unabridged Devil's Dictionary* (edited by Joshi and Schultz; University of Georgia Press, 2000).

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REINSTATING THE STATE IN ANARCHIST CRITIQUE

BY URI GORDON

There is a general
indeterminacy
over the role of
the state
in recent
anarchist theory,
leading to
vagueness
in many
contemporary
critiques.



In what follows I argue that while intersectional and postanarchist interventions have shifted central anarchist concerns somewhat away from the state, a more sophisticated approach is now required which takes these

approaching anarchist critiques of the state, one is immediately confronted with a seeming paradox: there is in fact very little in contemporary anarchist literature to suggest a distinct anarchist analysis of the state and its workings

interventions into account while restoring the state's centrality to anarchist theory. I offer initial thoughts on such an approach, by conceptualizing the state as an institution that underwrites more diffuse regimes of domination, and as a nexus through which these are rationalized and controlled.

1 IN APPROACHING ANARCHIST CRITIQUES of the state, one is immediately confronted with a seeming paradox: while all anarchists reject the state as an institution and work towards its abolition, there is in fact very little in contemporary anarchist literature to suggest a distinct anarchist *analysis* of the state and its workings. Overall, contemporary activists' expression fails to provide a clear and detailed account of what the state actually is, how it operates, and what may be expected of it in the future. Even terse and partial accounts are rare among the countless action reports, campaign calls for solidarity and intermural debates. In relation to the state, as to other features of society that they seek to abolish, anarchists seem content to elaborate an *ethical* position focused on the correspondence between the means and ends of their struggle, while leaving the analytical work to others. This raises a preliminary question: Do anarchists even require their own distinctive theory of the state? After all, in matters relating to the multiple systems of domination to which

they object, anarchists seem content to be magpies, incorporating those insights of feminists, black and indigenous liberation activists, LGBT militants, and so on which most closely resonate with their own values. Yet I would like to argue that the case of the state is different. Here we are no longer dealing with a system that oppresses only a section of humanity, where anarchists' solidarity with those who directly struggle against their own oppression leads them to privilege those agents' analysis. The state is ubiquitous. It is not a system of domination in the same way that patriarchy, racism or homophobia are. It is, instead, the one area where anarchists cannot appeal to subsidiarity but must instead argue *as anarchists* and provide an analysis that is truly their own.

Examining such extant efforts, it is certainly impossible to provide anything like a representative account that can confidently claim to gauge the relative importance or prevalence of various trends and tendencies. I would like to begin, however, with those semi-doctrinal statements emanating from groups associated with the especifist current.¹ This is not because these groups are necessarily larger or more representative, but because their adherence to principles of theoretical and tactical unity, and their investment in explicit, written statements of principle, leads to the expectation that one will find a well thought out position in their documents. Here then, is a quote from the core theoretical document of the Federação Anarquista do Rio de Janeiro (FARJ), *Social Anarchism and Organization*.

We consider the state the set of political powers of a nation [o conjunto de poderes políticos de uma nação], that takes shape by means of "political, legislative, judicial, military and financial institutions etc." [the quote is from Malatesta's "Anarchy," UG]; and, in this way, the state is broader than the government. The state, since its inception in antiquity...has always been an instrument for perpetuating inequality and a liberty-extermimating element, whatever the existing mode of production.²

This definition raises a serious difficulty from the very outset. The "nation" is invoked here as a logically antecedent entity, to which belong the powers whose conjunction by institutional means is defined as the state. Yet the

This is an adapted English version of "Moderne Anarchist_innen und die Zukunft der Staatskunst," in Peter Seyferth, Ed., *Den Staat zerschlagen! Anarchistische Staatsverständnisse* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2015)

term “nation” is neither problematized nor even mentioned anywhere else in the entire document. The authors’ evident commitment to anarchist principles rules out the possibility that they have in mind the “nation” in the sense invoked by nationalists, a more or less homogeneous and historically continuous identity which somehow precedes the state rather than being manufactured by it.³ But then the term is either left empty of content, which leaves us with no clear understanding of *whose* powers are conjoined in the state; or else the term may be taken simply to refer to a territorial unit, in which case the terms “nation” and “state” are in fact synonymous and the definition is lost to circularity. For a statement born of an exhaustive collective process, this is surprisingly careless wording.

Further, the FARJ statement regards the state as an *instrument*, more specifically as an instrument of the capitalist ruling class. The state is a “strong pillar of capitalism” and in all effect subservient to its long-term interests:

The state extrapolates the political ambit [...] and functions as an economic agent of capitalism...In the course of the historical process...A state that clearly defends the position of the capitalists could intensify class struggle and there is therefore nothing better, from the capitalists’ point of view, than to give it an aspect of neutrality. Giving it the appearance of an independent – or even autonomous – organism in relation to the ruling class or to capitalism itself...As with representative democracy, measures that improve conditions for workers always function, for the state, as an ideological tool to pass off this idea of neutrality, independence and autonomy... [yet] the state, as a strong pillar of capitalism, seeks to sustain it and, if capitalism is a system of exploitation and domination, the state cannot do anything else but sustain the class relations that exist in its midst.

On this formulation, the autonomy of the state is not even partial but simply illusory. The state is an instrumental mechanism for class dominance, and its actions are reduced to a mere service of capital. There are two problems with this account. The first is that it fails to provide an adequate foundation for explaining the usurpation of one ruling class by another, especially in cases such as the

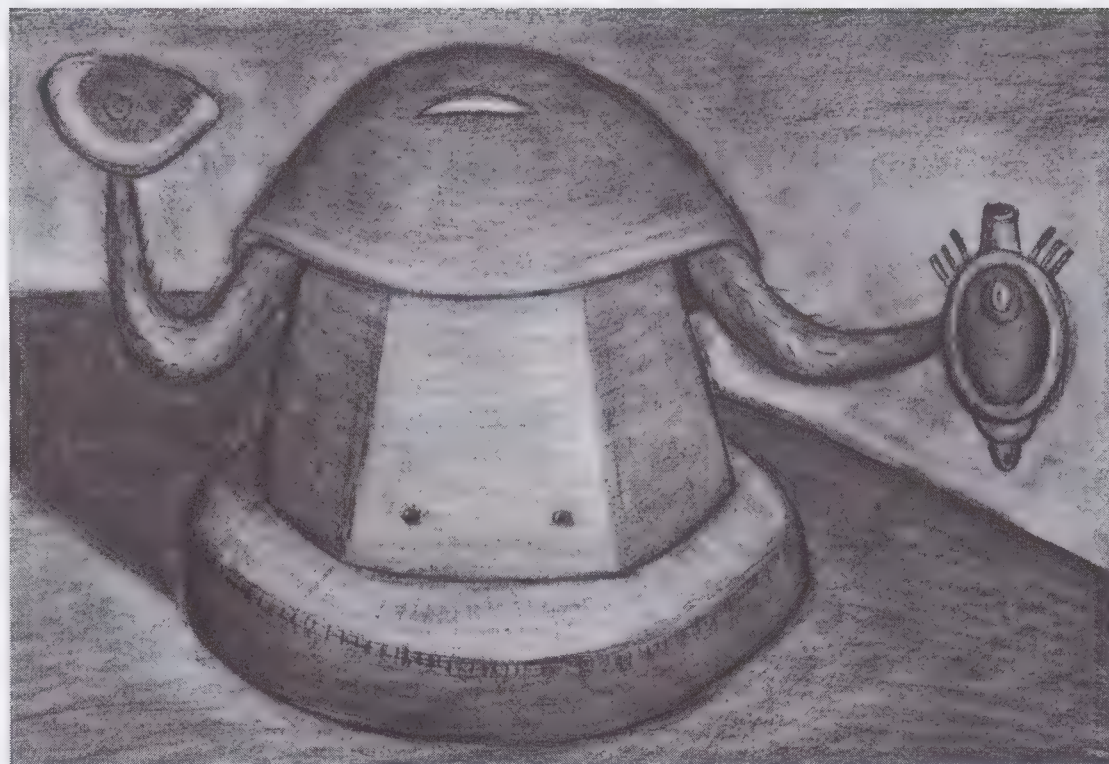
Russian Revolution where capitalism had yet to mature. If the state is an “economic agent of capitalism,” not circumstantially but fundamentally, then it remains unclear how it could also be the agent of a bureaucratic ruling class composed not of capitalists but of party functionaries. Adopting an analysis of the Soviet system as state capitalism does not solve the problem but only makes it more pronounced, since such an account presents the state in a generative relationship towards capital rather than vice versa. Secondly, the FARJ doctrine does not provide an explanation of how the state relates to other forms of domination and oppression not based on class, such as patriarchy and racism. While these could theoretically be reduced to phenomena auxiliary to a foundational class oppression, this would

the tension in today’s anarchist discourse is heightened by two opposing trends: on the one hand a centrifugal trend that draws attention away from forms of power located specifically in the state, and thus leads to accounts that reduce its centrality; and a centripetal trend that draws attention directly to the state, and maintains its centrality

render anarchist analysis undistinguishable from libertarian forms of Marxism. Perhaps anarchists can do better.

A similar account is found in a recent blog post by Seattle activist Dave Fryett, responding to a liberal call for Occupy activists to work with the Democratic party:

We do not seek merely the end of the police state, but the end of the state altogether... Capitalism has wrought a society remorselessly divided into the few rich and the great many poor. It is the *raison d’être* of the state to perpetuate this inequality. The state exists to suppress democracy as the



great mass of people would never willingly accept the pitiless economic polarization under which we are compelled to live. In its entirety, the state is the enforcement apparatus of ruling class power. It cannot be reformed, it has to go, as does the power behind it.⁴

Another Platformist group, the South African Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front, hits closer to the mark in an official position statement when asserting that “the State is not simply the tool of economic interests, but a structure of domination in its own right and with its own dynamics,” and that one of its two main imperatives (alongside safeguarding the process of capital accumulation) is “to preserve its domination over society” — in defence of a ruling class composed of not only the capitalists “but also the generals, the politicians and the top civil servants.”⁵ In insisting that the state is both dependent on capitalism and partially autonomous towards it, this statement more closely approaches what could qualify as a full-blooded anarchist account in which the state has independent status. Still, we are left without a detailed account of the internal workings of the state: the ZACF’s pithy

account still presents the state monolithically, and is as silent as the FARJ concerning forms of domination that could be conceived in other than class terms.

These two contradictory positions — the autonomy of the state and its subservience to capital — are present throughout the history of anarchist expression. The Anarchist FAQ, in an attempt to synthesize the anarchist canon into a self-consistent whole, ends up presenting them unproblematically alongside one another. On the one hand,

the “essence of government” is that “it is a thing apart, developing its own interests” and so is “an institution existing for its own sake” [Voltairine de Cleyre] ... “a highly complex state machine ... leads to the formation of a class especially concerned with state management, which, using its acquired experience, begins to deceive the rest for its personal advantage.” ... the “State has been, and still is, the main pillar and the creator, direct and indirect, of Capitalism and its powers over the masses.” [Kropotkin] ... while “a special class (government) which, provided with the necessary means of repression, exists to legalise and protect the owning class from the demands of the workers...

it uses the powers at its disposal to create privileges for itself and to subject, if it can, the owning class itself as well." [Malatesta]

On the other hand,

the state is basically "the property owners' gendarme" [Malatesta] ... [it] is "the political expression of the economic structure" of society [Nicholas Walter] ... It represents the essential coercive mechanisms by which capitalism and the authority relations associated with private property are sustained ... it is the primary function of the state to uphold [class] domination... the mission of all governments ... is to protect and maintain by force the ... privileges of the possessing classes." [Kropotkin] ... the state machine remains a tool by which the few can enrich themselves at the expense of the many.⁶

2 I WOULD LIKE TO ARGUE THAT THE tension between these two positions in today's anarchist discourse is heightened by two opposing trends: on the one hand a centrifugal trend that draws attention away from forms of power located specifically in the state, and thus leads to accounts that reduce its centrality; and a centripetal trend that draws attention directly to the state, and maintains its centrality.

One aspect of the centrifugal trend has to do with the neoliberal economic reconstruction of the past decades. The apparent retreat of the state from its previous role as an economic actor — through financial deregulation, the removal of tariffs, privatization of state-owned industries and public services, and cuts in social spending — all create the impression that the role of the state in society is diminishing, and that where it was once possible to associate it with aspects of control and injustice, these are now being taken over by private interests. Another aspect is internal to anarchist thought, namely the postanarchist emphasis on the ontological indeterminacy and dislocation of power. This account seeks to move away from what Todd May calls a "strategical" account of power to a "tactical" one. The former "is engaged in a project that it regards as the centre of [a?] political universe ... all problems can be reduced to the basic one ... a central problematic within

the purview of which all injustices can be accounted for." The latter, as embodied in the works of poststructuralist writers including Foucault, Deleuze and Lyotard, argues that "there is no centre within which power is to be located... There are many different sites from which it arises, and there is an interplay among these" (May 1994:11). While there are crucial intersections around which power conglomerates, it does not originate in these points. The postanarchist project is, at least in part, concerned with taking anarchism away from a strategic view which imagines the state as a pivotal locus of power and therefore a primary target for revolutionary attack, to a tactical account that instead views power as located in multiple institutions and in the interstices of social interaction, in cultural expectations, and in conceptions of the self.

The centripetal trend points in the opposite direction. Far from receding or becoming dislocated, state power is more relevant than ever and still maintains a privileged — though

in insisting that the state is both dependent on capitalism and partially autonomous towards it, this statement more closely approaches what could qualify as a full-blooded anarchist account in which the state has independent status

perhaps not ultimate — position in terms of the generation and maintenance of social hierarchy. First, there is an evident increase in nominally democratic states' use of repression and surveillance, from biometric databases and wiretapping to increasingly violent crowd control and extrajudicial executions at home and abroad. Measures justified in the name of defence against jihadist terrorism very quickly bled over to the repression

of animal rights groups, environmentalists, human rights defenders, minority nationalists, and anarchists. An appreciation of this aspect is expressed in a recent communique from Anonymous/Lulzsec, which has by now completed its transformation from a single-issue anti-Scientology outfit to a network with unmistakable anarchist affinities:

It's the old double standard that has been around since the 80's. Govt Agencies are obsessed with witchhunts against hackers worldwide, whilst they also recruit hackers to carry out their own political agendas... You are forbidden to outsmart the system, to defy it, to work around it. In short, while you may hack for the status quo, you are forbidden to hack the status quo. Just do what you're told. Don't worry about dirty geopolitical games, that's business for the elite... Just dance along, hackers. Otherwise... well...

Second, and in obvious contradiction to the appearance of neoliberal retreat, Western governments' fiscal activism in the wake of the financial crisis, including bank bailouts and austerity measures, point to the state as a more interventionist and powerful entity than the centrifugal trend alone would sug-

the state can be abolished, at least in principle, by annihilating the roles and procedures through which individuals embody it

gest. Nor is this a new development. Noam Chomsky emphasizes that "the dynamic state sector was and remained a primary factor in development and innovation" through procurement, subsidies, and regular bailouts. In the US this has been heavily reflected in the defense budget, and more lately in the life sciences and information technology sectors. As a counter-argument to the appearance of state retreat and deregulation, Chomsky emphasizes that "the state has always been a central factor in economic development,"⁷ whereby the public pays the costs and takes the risks while the

result is eventually privatized. Relatedly, Jason Royce Lindsey argues that

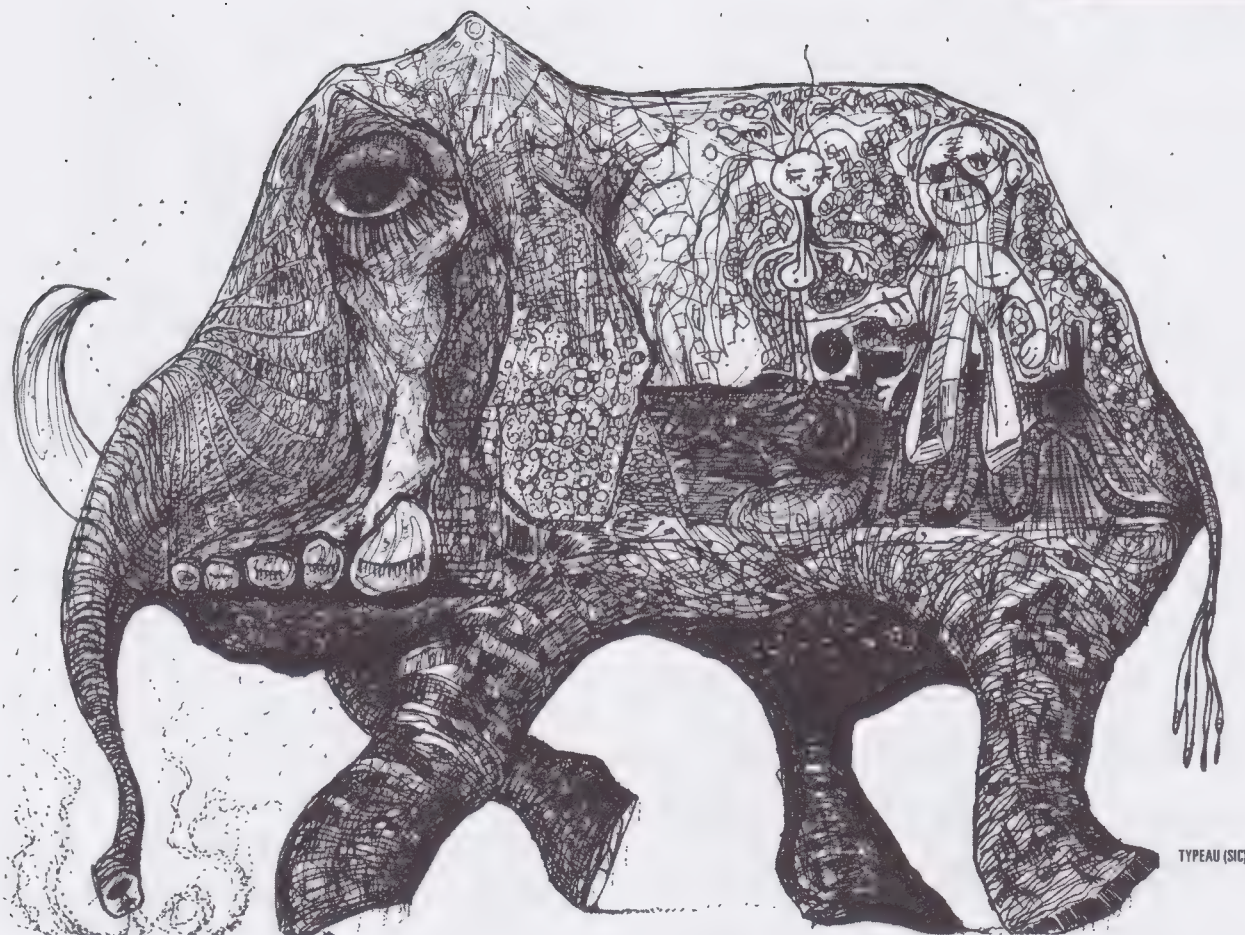
There is agency and design to the contemporary state's declining visibility. The state is still an important institution, but this fact has become more difficult to see thanks to ideological camouflage...the state has not metastasized into society and become less relevant. Instead, the state has greatly expanded its control of society by employing surveillance and discipline at a distance. This sleight of hand allows the state to creep into...more and more areas of life. Nonetheless, the state remains an organized institution behind this colonized front.⁸

The tension between these two trends is evident in numerous contemporary utterances on the state that anarchists would find appealing. One prominent example is The Invisible Committee's widely circulated tract *The Coming Insurrection* — a text that is perhaps more indebted to the French left-communist tradition than to anarchism in the strict sense, but which has nevertheless circulated widely among anarchists and found sympathy among many of them. Towards the end of the text the authors express what we have identified above as centrifugal thinking which draws attention away from the state, or any other center of power for that matter:

the end of centralized revolutions reflects the decentralization of power... Power is no longer concentrated in one point in the world; it is the world itself, its flows and its avenues, its people and its norms, its codes and its technologies. Power is the organization of the metropolis itself. It is the impeccable totality of the world of the commodity at each of its points.⁹

Yet earlier in the text, the authors offer a different statement which is preceded by another one which accords much more importance to the state, not only as an instrument of repression but as a formative force on individual consciousness:

In France, civilization is inseparable from the state. The older and more powerful the state, the less it is a superstructure or exoskeleton of a society and the more it constitutes the subjectivities that people it. The French state is the very texture of



French subjectivities, the form assumed by the centuries-old castration of its subjects.

While *The Invisible Committee* probably favours evocative language over analytical precision, a contemporary anarchist theory of the state would need to somehow respond to both trends. It thus faces two central challenges:

- To account for the relationship between state and capital in a way that does not reduce the former to an auxiliary of the latter.
- To account for the relationship between state power and forms of domination such as patriarchy and racism which does not reduce them to epiphenomena of class.

3 AS WE HAVE SEEN ABOVE, THERE DO exist anarchist utterances which construct the state as an autonomous entity in its own right, not reducible to a tool of capital. Saul Newman elaborates on this view:

Oppression and despotism exist, then, in the very structure and symbolic location of the state: in the principle of sovereignty that lies at its heart. The state, in other words, constitutes its own locus of power: it is not merely a derivative of class power. The state has its own specific logic, its own momentum, its own priorities: these are often beyond the control of the ruling class and do not necessarily reflect economic relations.¹⁰

There are, however, a few problems with Newman's account. To begin with, he mistakenly attributes this account to anarchism as such, ignoring the reductive/instrumental view which is also, as we have seen, present in the tradition. Secondly, Newman's phrasing is contradictory: if the state's priorities are "beyond the control of the ruling class" then the latter hardly rules. What he should have said that they are beyond the control of the *capitalist* class. Finally, Newman goes perhaps too far in reversing the state-capital relation such that "the political forces of the state actually

determine and select specific relations of production...that are functional for the state, allowing the development of the means of coercion required by the state." This is not a position that Newman argues for in any detail, but it is inspired by Alan Carter's "analytical anarchism" — an attempt to mirror the analytical Marxism of G.A. Cohen, John Roemer, and others by offering an account of political forces and relations alongside economic ones. In Carter's scheme, it is the structure of political relations which selects economic relations that are functional for it, in producing the surplus that is necessary for the development of political forces (e.g. the military and police that depend on taxation).

domination, indeed, is not a thing or a fetish; it is dyed into the fabric of everyday social relations, cultural grammars, habits of thinking, and mutual expectations. But the state, to use the term in a narrower and more normal sense, is in no such way diffuse

This is, on its face, an attractive account for anarchists. First, because its insistence on the primacy of the state and its generative stance towards capital provides the strongest possible argument against both parliamentarism and vanguardism. Secondly, because it has the appearance of a full-blooded anarchist account, that is, one rooted independently in the state and thus finally free from its feelings of inferiority relative to Marxist analysis.

However, there remains a problem with this account: it circumscribes our understanding of social relations — political forces and relations are narrowly conceived in terms of the state, leaving out the many forms of extralegal domination that anarchists also need to theorize in order to combat. While it is indeed impossible

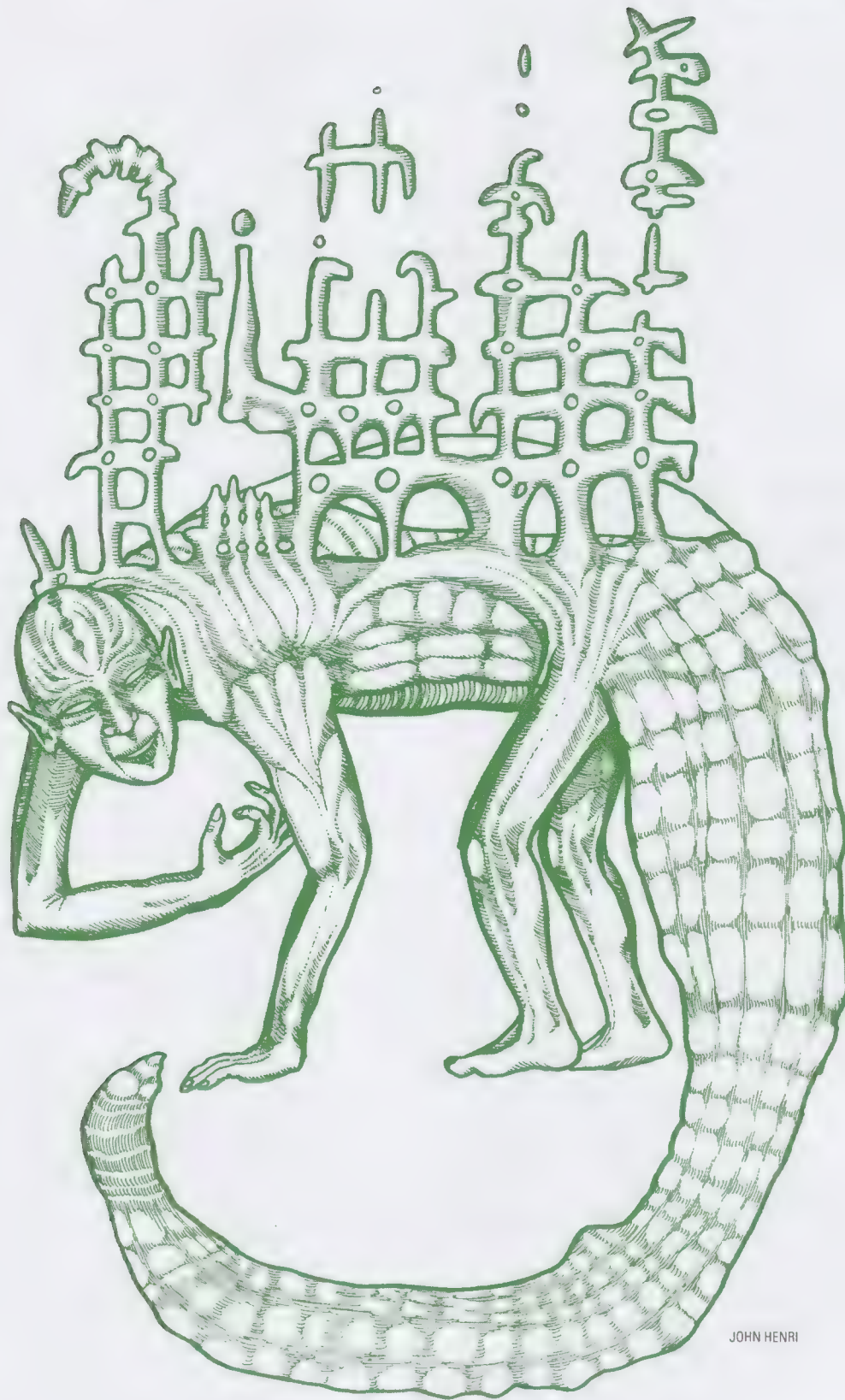
to explain the emergence of the first form of surplus economy — slavery — without positing an earlier coercive apparatus capable of enslaving, it would be more difficult to explain, say, gender domination as the product of the state, at least in its modern form. So while this account does do some work for us in extracting the state from the instrumental account which sees it as subservient to capital, we still need a wider account that contextualizes the state within a broader intersectional theory.

Let me begin by approaching this second challenge by looking at Gustav Landauer's famous utterance on the state:

One can throw away a chair and destroy a pane of glass; but ... [only] idle talkers ... regard the state as such a thing or as a fetish that one can smash in order to destroy it. The state is a condition, a certain relationship among human beings, a mode of behavior between men; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently toward one another ... We are the state, and we shall continue to be the state until we have created the institutions that form a real community and society.

What is most striking about this statement often goes unnoticed, namely the fact that Landauer's analysis is *not* about the state in any narrow or institutionally circumscribed sense of the term. Instead, Landauer is pointing to relations of domination beyond the state and outside its specific institutional boundaries. What does it mean that "we are the state"? When a man beats his wife he is not being the state. He is being patriarchy, sexism, gendered domination — call it what you will, but it is quite distinct from the state. The state, at least the liberal state, would at least in principle censure such behaviour, educate against it, and outlaw it — even if this is enforced all too rarely. Likewise, when European football fans emit monkey howls as a player of African origins comes on the pitch, they are not "being the state"; they are expressing a form of racism that is doubtlessly outside the state, whatever other forms of institutional discrimination against people of African origin the latter may preserve.

What Landauer is doing in this phrase is to preserve the term "state" as a rhetorical device, since his audience presumably sees



JOHN HENRI

it as the primary object of resistance, but in order to argue that liberation cannot be realized through the destruction of things he then expands the meaning of the term state, so much that it no longer conforms to any reasonable understanding of the term. What Landauer ends up referring to under the heading “state” is in fact *domination* — the entire ensemble of social relations characterised by the power of one person, group, or institution over another. And domination, indeed, is not a thing or a fetish. It is dyed into the fabric of everyday social relations, cultural grammars, habits of thinking, and mutual expectations.

the state can be abolished, at least in principle, by annihilating the roles and procedures through which individuals embody it

But the state, to use the term in a narrower and more normal sense, is in no such way diffuse. On the contrary, it does reside in a concrete set of institutions, persons, and places.

We just said that a wife-beater or racist Ultra is not “being the state.” But it is precisely by counterexample to these that we can approach a more concrete understanding of what it does mean to be the state. It is reasonable to maintain, for example, that where the state is not embodied and enacted by acts that it deems illegal, it is so by its actual employees. A soldier standing at a checkpoint, a Consulate official considering a visa application, a judge proclaiming a prison sentence — these individuals *are* “being the state” in a way quite distinct from, and more specific than, what Landauer means when he says “we are the state.” The state, unlike domination or hierarchy, *is* a discrete body of people, buildings, weapons, information storage devices and so on, bound by certain procedures and elements of organizational culture. Concomitantly, unlike domination, the state *can* be abolished, at least in principle, by annihilating the roles

and procedures through which individuals embody it.

We can thus begin approaching an anarchist account of the state as a polycentric, but nevertheless formal, nexus in which regimes of domination are actuated into enforceable policy, as well as being renegotiated and mitigated. In an unpublished manuscript, Glasberg and Shannon move towards such an account. Generalizing from Jessop’s concept of “state projects”¹² they theorise the way in which the state, through its process of policy formation, contributes to the social construction of regimes of domination outside class. Legislation, policy formation, the promulgation of directives and procedures, budget allocation, and judicial determination all act to reproduce (but sometimes also weaken, or at least reconfigure), racism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and speciesism as well as class exploitation. Existing patterns in these regimes of domination condition and bias policy creation, yet there is also a possibility of at least some successful counter-pressure by oppressed groups. On this reading, the state itself is

both an arena of struggle and an actor that, above all other actors, has the unique authority to codify social constructions into legalized norms and to enforce these in ways that shape cultural repertoires and social behaviors, but which is also subject to resistance and modification from below ... State projects are thus animated by the push and pull of political forces in the claims process, producing an ongoing dialectic of policy making and implementation, as well as social practices and repertoires over time.¹³

The state, in other words, does remain a privileged node in the lattice of social forces since it is where they become condensed and actualized into enforceable policy. There are certainly also intersections outside the state where regimes of domination are oppressions are instantiated, elaborated and/or normalized, but the coercive capacity that underwrites every state project does generate a qualitative difference that anarchists should be stressing. As Glasberg and Shannon point out, an account of this kind also generates multiple avenues for research into the specifics of various recombinations of domination regimes within the multiple institutional

organs of the state, as well as their interaction with extra-state ones.

The combination of peaking oil production, runaway climate change, and devaluing speculative capital has already placed industrial civilization — and thus capitalism — on an irreversible trajectory of decay, however protracted and uneven. This realization is perhaps more widely shared among anarchists today than its prominence in their literature would indicate. In this context, I would like to draw attention to one possibility which has not been emphasized enough in my opinion: this decomposition is likely to come under management from above and give rise to more, rather than fewer, oppressive social forms. There are strong indications that the more forward-thinking sections of corporate, political, and military state elites are past the point of denial about this trajectory. On this reading, current state-driven trends from the Green New Deal to fiscal austerity amount to efforts to prolong the period of manageable crisis, so as to allow hierarchical society and the state to adapt away from capitalism. While dwindling energy resources will inevitably require a transition to more local and labour-intensive forms of production, this transition will have to be a state-driven process. Such a process would aim at the creation of post-capitalist models of alienated production, which, while appropriate for a declining resource base, continue to harness human productive power to arrangements of economic imprisonment and maintain the same regimes of domination we are familiar with. If successful in the long run, such a strategy may usher in new forms of feudalism in which labour is at least partly de-commodified and replaced by serfdom — while armed elites retain privileged access to whatever energy resources remain. The role of the state will be increasingly important in such a scenario, and anarchist strategies should adapt to it. The context is now a struggle over the nature of the social and political structures that will arise amid industrial modernity's decaying ruins. An account of the state that appreciates its ability to work not only against the immediate interest of capital but against its very existence is helpful in constructing revolutionary anarchist imaginaries that can effectively initiate and/or intervene in the resistance to this trajectory. (A)

Endnotes

- 1 Platformist groups take their inspiration from "The Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists," a document produced in 1926 Paris by Nestor Makhno and his comrades. *Especifismo* is a Latin American development of the platformist tradition which continues to emphasize the need for a specifically anarchist organization built around a unity of ideas.
- 2 Federação Anarquista do Rio de Janeiro (2008/2012). "Society of Domination and Exploitation: Capitalism and the State." Part 4/16 of *Social Anarchism and Organization*, trans. Jonathan Payn. anarkismo.net/article/21892
- 3 Cf. Rocker, Rudolf (1978). *Nationalism and Culture*. St. Paul, MN: Michael E. Coughlin. p.200
- 4 Fryett, Dave (2012). *On the Appeal of Anarchism, a Response to Don Smith's "Are Anarchists in Occupy Aiding Grover Norquist?"*; <http://www.opednews.com/articles/On-the-Appeal-of-Anarchism-by-Dave-Fryett-120918-538.html>
- 5 Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front (n.d.). *Class Struggle, Capitalism and the State*. Johannesburg: ZACF; zabnew.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/class_struggle_capitalism_and_the_state_zacf.pdf
- 6 Iain MacKay et al (2010). *An Anarchist FAQ*, §B.2. www.infoshop.org/AnarchistFAQSectionB2. See texts for the references to citations form the canon.
- 7 Noam Chomsky (2009). "Crisis and Hope: Theirs and Ours." *Boston Review*, September/October. <http://www.chomsky.info/articles/200909--.htm>
- 8 Jason Lindsay (forthcoming) *Concealment of the State*. New York: Bloomsbury. Ch.1
- 9 The Invisible Committee *The Coming Insurrection*. <https://tarnac9.wordpress.com/texts/the-coming-insurrection/>
- 10 Saul Newman (2004). "Anarchism, Marxism and the Bonapartist State." *Anarchist Studies* 12.1, 43
- 11 Alan Carter (2000). "Analytical Anarchism: Some conceptual foundations." *Political Theory* 28.2: 230-253
- 12 Jessop, Bob (1990). *State Theory: Putting the Capitalist State in its Place*. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- 13 Glasberg, Davita Silfen and Deric Shannon. (Submitted). *The State of State Theory: A Look at Where We've Been and Where We Might Go*.



JOHN HENRI



Theological Residues

A Response to
"The Undying Appeal of White Nationalism"

by Frank Love

*The [anarchist] is the man who has heard the alarm
but charges off in the wrong direction.*

~ Ernst Jünger, *Eumeswil*, 1977 ~

AN ABRIDGED ESSAY ENTITLED "THE UNDYING APPEAL of White Nationalism: Neofascism in the Cultural, Artistic, and Ecological Movements" (UA) was published in *Black Seed* #2.¹ The essay seems to be largely celebrated within the American antifa and insurrectionist anarchist scenes, because it purportedly outlines nascent threats to liberatory social change. Other, more suspicious, anarchists remain skeptical towards its assertions, the value judgments within them, and can't help but smile disdainfully at their foundational mythology.

UA's title is an indirect homage to "The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism," by Fredy Perlman, originally published in 1984 in *Fifth Estate*. Unless you knew of Perlman's essay, you would not know it was a reference; no mention of it appears in UA. Fredy's essay gives a short yet sweeping storytelling of the "experiences of both a newer revolutionary nationalism and an older conservative nationalism" throughout Asia, Europe, and the Americas and offers a deeply pessimistic assessment of Leftist/revolutionary thought and practice. Fredy shows, as had Bonanno and others before him, how nationalist struggles of the oppressed tend to create their image negative: the oppressed become the new executioners.

¹ The complete essay can be found at anarchistnews.org/content/undying-appeal-white-nationalism

If there were to be a similarity between the two texts, it would be that Perlman accomplishes what UA only imperfectly attempts: a kind of genealogy. Perlman's pulls upward and outward, and from that birds-eye view shows the flows of power and resistance, and the insidious ways people continue the cycle of what they fight. This view shows numerous forces at work over time and teases out the unconscious, and unintended, similarities between them. While UA's writers also tell a story, theirs doesn't lie within the content. UA's content is formed through their underlying mythology. By forcing the content to their form, UA links disparate and tenuous

by forcing the content to their form, the authors link disparate and tenuous phenomena by hastily using undefined terms, intended to elicit immediate and unthinking emotional outrage

phenomena by hastily using undefined terms, intended to elicit immediate and unthinking emotional outrage. This creates a paranoid and conspiratorial atmosphere intended to cause any anarchist reading UA to get the sense that neo-fascism exists all around and that it must be frantically warded off like a plague.

UA begins by creating a meta-narrative about the "real situation" of the state of the world: the "earth is firmly enveloped in crisis," a crisis "at once material and existential," which has "produced only one reality: an intensified stratification of global society." One can already begin to predict UA's mythological and ethical universalism though the rigidity of this global truth. They continue, emphasizing that "Democracy appears as the ridiculous theater that it always was," yet later, they will accentuate their claim that Nick Land is a neo-fascist by calling him "anti-democratic." They go on to assert that everyone is suspicious of the over-arching narratives that are spoken to them from above, making them seem without purpose. UA claims that this leads youth to

cynicism and insincerity as a means to grapple with meaninglessness. In time, however, the youth (and presumably others) find that emptiness leaves them unfulfilled. It is here, upon this plane of meaning, that UA weaponizes their mythology into Truth in order to mobilize bodies. As such, they claim this mobilization will be "a blockade of material resistance" that will "smash up against the New Right."

While UA's authors claim that all modern meta-narratives "are without purpose," they begin by articulating yet another meta-narrative: there is a crisis of meaning and the Left battles the Right for salvation through Truth. This narrative is derivative of Christian mythology, and it leads their ultimate political position and action plan toward religious ends: waging an anarchist holy war against the material and metaphysical forces of evil, with the unconscious mass trapped in limbo, waiting for "meaning to be restored."

UA's universalized mythological underpinnings are also utilized to tell the story of Occupy and the square-oriented "popular movements":

The recession of 2008 propelled the earth into a state of delirium. Over the following three years, the world fought to materially answer the existential crisis; to existentially answer the material. These popular movements posed a question. Is it even possible, in the 21st century, to imagine another way of living? All of society was exposed for its repressive essence, and people began to appropriate buildings, parks, universities, vacant lots, and city centers to begin directly creating a different way of life.

The question of the people fighting in occupied buildings and sleeping in city squares never received a response. Echoes, but not answers. The militants of 2011 reluctantly returned to life in the void.

But Occupy failed, so the global enemy makes their move:

We are still living with the same crisis. Meaning has yet to be restored. Around the world a new movement is emerging.

Across the globe, a reactionary wave has presented itself as the answer to the question posed six years ago.

The way they construct this myth escapes all nuance and complexity, creating a unified image of the world. With this story, one might

be led to believe that there was a singular and liberatory voice on Earth crying out for meaning, shouting out a question, and there was no answer — save for tear gas, swinging batons, and popular annoyance; then a global and singular voice of reaction rose up with their turn at the political table, to push upon the world a contemporary holocaust.

This simple narrative in UA fails to acknowledge important counter-examples, such as the libertines who *didn't* join the Nazis, or the Wandervogel-inspired Hippies who *didn't* become fascists, or that Nick Land is not only *not* a white nationalist but quite adequately assesses and thoroughly demeans it.² Likewise, they attempt to link neo-folk music to the hipster-nihilist, by way of a common aesthetic irony. They then link the hipster-nihilist to the anarchist-nihilist, asserting a “post-racial” connection while not in any way acknowledging anti-fascist anarchist-nihilists, such as Renzo Novatore, Enzo Martucci, and Bruno Filippi et al, who were in an all out war with Italian fascists in early 1900s.³ Finally, within the nihilism-neofolk thread, they attempt to link it all together with Exile and Sadie. When looking down this rabbit hole, it is hard not to feel abysmally too much of something — vertigo. The issue is not about whether we agree, partially or otherwise, with the hipster-nihilist, Land, Exile and Sadie, or any of the other historical groups or their offshoots. The issue is that the authors of UA continue to tell stories throughout that don't articulate difference, nuance, or good faith, which makes it impossible for us not to see their ideological disposition: demanding an undefined purity in theory and action.

An exclusive focus on action, the “blockade of material resistance,” leaves them only a narrow path for engaging with the people they claim are neo-fascists (let alone their

ideas). Such people, across the board, are the enemy, including former anarchists Exile and Sadie, who served their time quietly and without snitching. No attempt at further understanding, or of teasing out what is actually happening, is possible — or even thinkable. This is a war that is to be dealt with on the street, in the struggle. While there are people who clearly have bad ideas, there are also many who have let understandable existential questions and attempts at answers lead them to try to locate kin, find meaning, or live from a land base. Along that path some picked up nasty baggage, no doubt. But UA's writers reduce all of the possible mappings of difference and potential dissipation into a black-and-white beat down of the enemy. That

they attempt to link neo-folk music to the hipster-nihilist ... then link the hipster-nihilist to the anarchist-nihilist, asserting a “post-racial” connection while not in any way acknowledging anti-fascist anarchist-nihilists

is, again, an enemy who mostly exists at the outer fringes of sub-cultures that cannot be absorbed into such an equality-driven assimilationist culture.

It is fascinating to notice that UA's social position is actually much closer to fascism than any of the anti-social positions they decry. Fascism is actually a highly social form. UA's authors acknowledge that the current economic order “can not, or will not [...] support the human weight that bends it at its foundation” and then concede that “all of society [is] exposed for its repressive essence.” Yet anyone approaching near the outer edge, just before or, god forbid, crossing over into antinatalist,

2 thedarkenlightenment.com/the-dark-enlightenment-by-nick-land/#part4

3 theanarchistlibrary.org/category/author/renzo-novatore
theanarchistlibrary.org/category/author/bruno-filippi
theanarchistlibrary.org/category/author/enzo-martucci

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Having No Dog in the Fight:

AK Press versus Michael Schmidt

by Lawrence Jarach

IT IS A TRUISM THAT ANARCHISTS ARE conspicuously eager to denounce and excommunicate other anarchists. This past autumn was no exception, when AK Press very publicly accused their one-time star author Michael Schmidt of being a fascist infiltrator, and unceremoniously announced that his titles would be put out of print. In a comparatively rare moment, left-anarchists were *not* lashing out at rivals outside their own tendencies; instead, two subgroups of left-anarchists carved out rigidly divided positions, and fought each other over the scraps of their relevance and reputations at the pole of syndicalist/organizationalist/activist conformity. This scandal, while certain to attract only limited attention outside the factional fringes and gossip wings of Anglophone anarchism, is nevertheless in some ways emblematic of Leftist Common Sense: the idea that there's something peculiar to the ideology of one's enemies/rivals that draws them to bad politics,

or that their bad politics are somehow something more than a personal failing.¹ And because of the high profile of AK Press outside the commonly insular world of anarchists, this fight has created some unfortunate attention that affects all anarchists, regardless of their personal adherence — or indifference — to either side.

Rather than the difficult task of analyzing specific examples of deviance in the opinions and behaviors of their opponents, self-described radicals tend to demonize backsliders, renegades, and turncoats. The insult most often deployed is the too-easy, all-purpose supposed inversion of Leftism: *fascism*. For good measure, and just in case its inherent vagueness weren't automatically bad enough, the AK Press statement included an allegation of white nationalism/white supremacy, as if they were all qualitatively similar and/or overlapping ideologies. Most likely this is indicative of a generational drift in Leftist political insults; while calling someone a *fascist* was the instinctive favorite from the 1930s through the 1970s, by the 1990s the dominant go-to became labeling an opponent *racist* and/or a *white supremacist*. Such demagoguery (the deployment of such terms is almost never based on even the shallowest attempt at a descriptive, let alone critical, analysis) is used to shut down any possibility of discussion — going for the politico-emotional jugular, as it were; for a

person of the Left, surely there is nothing more horrifying than to impute her_his support for the most oppressive right-wing state-sponsored system of institutionalized domination, a system that went so far as to endorse the judicial and extra-judicial murder of political opponents and other inconvenient people.

While the public reproduction of a 2008 Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front (ZACF) internal document written by Michael Schmidt does point to him being a patronizing racist (if not precisely a white nationalist), the charge of “fascist” didn’t really fit in the exhaustive (and exhausting) five-part sub-journalistic exposé by Alexander Reid-Ross and Joshua Stephens²; further, the charge of “infiltrator” was abandoned in favor of the more imprecise “seducer.”³ Mostly it appears that AK Press is trying to de-embarrass themselves from having associated with Schmidt in the first place. Their backpedaling remains unconvincing; not because they aren’t good and genuine antiracists — but because the six-year AK Press/Schmidt collusion was merely the latest example of AK’s disruptive politics. If AK Press had never been responsible for publishing and distributing other books and pamphlets containing sectarian provocations directed against other anarchists, it might be easier to take their current disavowal as a genuine gesture of expiation.

A Chronology of Antagonistic Bickering

THERE IS A WIDER CONTEXT TO THIS INTERNAL left-anarchist outrage; problems with AK Press predate this latest bid for antifascist/antiracist respectability. This journal is on record as having a long-standing and mutually antagonistic relationship with AK Press for various reasons, one of which was their 2009 publication of the execrable and deliberately divisive *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (Counter-Power vol. 1) by Michael Schmidt and Lucien Van der Walt. While there have been several decent anarchist titles coming from AK over the last few years, the bulk has remained only haphazardly interesting for a general anarchist (and anarchist-curious) readership. But already fourteen years before the publication

of *Black Flame*, another project meant to exacerbate tensions and provoke unnecessary splits among anarchists was undertaken by the self-described sectarian Ramsey Kanaan and his cohorts at AK Press.⁵

When AK Press published Murray Bookchin’s *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism; An Unbridgeable Chasm* in 1995, they staked their collective claim to finding the answer to the question: why has there been a continual lack of a larger attraction to anarchist ideas and practices in the American political landscape? Before the 1990s, plenty of other anarchists lamented the lack of a mass movement in North America,⁶ but Bookchin made one important innovation in the more or less bleak years

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between the dissolution/repression/absorption of the social movements of The Sixties and the renewed excitement after Seattle. The blame for the enduring unpopularity of anarchism among people who (objectively?) should have been flocking to its ranks were *not* the cops who busted up meetings and harassed/arrested/framed known organizers and activists, the legislators who criminalized radical actions, the mainstream media who conflated anarchists with terrorists, the academics and intellectuals who ignored and/or misrepresented anarchists, or the Marxists who continually ridiculed and attacked anarchism; no, the blame was placed squarely on *other anarchists* — those with crazy ideas, who engaged in crazy activities, and promoted crazy projects. Earlier internal

upbraiders had condemned vegetarians, artists and musicians, fans of Stirner and Nietzsche, part- or full-time criminals, and other bohemian types with a predisposition to (sub) cultural manifestations of ideological and practical non-conformity. But Bookchin threw his net far wider than anyone before, going after a litany of marginalized/marginalizing kooks, and imposing the soon-to-be-of-repeated epithet "lifestylist" to this contradictory and

plenty of commentators insist that Schmidt's apparent adherence to pro-Boer white nationalism has no bearing on his and van der Walt's assertions and conclusions in *Black Flame*

incoherent jumble of people and projects who allegedly shared a rejection of rationalism, work(erism), organization, and other accoutrements of an anarchism infused with the worst aspects of Leftism.

Significantly, according to Janet Biehl, Bookchin's longtime confidante and partner, Murray had already privately expressed (*prior* to AK Press publishing *SALA*) his decision to abandon any further pretense to being an anarchist.⁷ This rather momentous decision for a celebrated anarchist (one who insisted on taking credit for just about every important positive innovation in anarchist thought from the 1970s through the 1990s⁸) was kept under wraps until his eventual public repudiation in 1999. What does it say about a writer who insists on attacking (certain kinds of) anarchists for being, well, *anarchists*, when his own adherence has lapsed? Had he really failed to mention this minor detail to his publisher? Were the folks at AK Press duped about his private renunciation? Unlike his later abandonment of anarchism *in toto*, Bookchin — precisely at the time he had

decided to turn his back on the tradition — insisted on writing a blanket condemnation of every aspect of contemporary anarchism that didn't align with his particular myopic perspective. Like other fans of *SALA* who continue to insist on citing it favorably, perhaps AK Press simply didn't care, as long as Bookchin's rivals and/or enemies were also theirs. The same can be said about the continued insistence of plenty of commentators that Schmidt's apparent adherence to pro-Boer white nationalism has no bearing on his and van der Walt's assertions and conclusions in *Black Flame*⁹ — despite the book having been written contemporaneously with Schmidt's Stormfront posts and the offending internal ZACF document.

The Accusations Fly

THE AK PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT PROMISING proof about the definitive discovery — after years of rumor — of the far-right/white supremacist sympathies of one of their more famous authors was greeted almost universally with decontextualized shock and scorn. Skeptical commentators were horrified by the idea that AK Press could foist the dreaded label *white supremacist* onto a well-respected anarchist author without corroboration. Certainly the official AK Press announcement came too quickly for most; the absence of any sort of evidence made plenty of people wonder why there had to be a delay in its presentation. Their credibility was further eroded when the evidence was finally presented; while it points to Schmidt being a person whose ideas about culture, ethnicity, and race are far to the right of all recognizable tendencies of anarchism, it doesn't really show him to be a fascist, nor does it point to Schmidt being a right-wing infiltrator among anarchists.

But the problem for me isn't so much about the gasp-inducing exaggerations of the original AK Press announcement, or the meandering ink-pissing of what amounts to extended pre-publication hype for Reid-Ross's book — *Against the Fascist Creep*, soon to be published by, yes, you guessed it: AK Press. This self-referential cover-your-ass performance by AK Press and their newest featured author is the stuff of burlesque.

My problem is the *context* of AK's melodramatic rejection of Schmidt, and the way they have removed themselves from any culpability for making questionable and poor decisions regarding authors and books for years.¹⁰ Some of us who've been paying attention over the past two decades have noticed that AK Press' printing and distribution decisions have been responsible for fomenting inter-anarchist hostility and dissension, for spreading untenable theses masquerading as scholarship, and for helping to confuse readers about the history and philosophy of anarchism. Their decisions to publish Bookchin's screed and Schmidt's co-authored provocation were two particularly noteworthy examples.

Infiltration

IF THE GOAL OF INFILTRATION IS TO sow dissension and confusion among a specific identifiable group, then AK Press has that built into its history, and already had plenty to answer for. Putting Schmidt's titles out of print doesn't even begin to address the damage AK Press has done to Anglophone anarchism over the past twenty-plus years.

SALA and *Black Flame* may not have created the schisms that their authors identified, but they served to polarize anarchists in ways that the more banal background bickering and sniping couldn't. The positive responses to each of these books were marked by the ability of their fans to overlook the more glaring inconsistencies; their boosters likely shared an animosity toward the offending targets as well as an affinity for the prescribed correctives.

The negative responses were dismissed as the defensive whining of attacks that hit too close to home. Critics of *Black Flame* were challenged by the pompous strategy of misdirection used by sociologists and journalists everywhere: we were supposed to find where the authors' conclusions could not be backed up by their bibliography and citations. As if a casually knowledgeable anarchist could, in the space of a few weeks or months, find the specific locations of misinterpretation, decontextualization, misrepresentation, and outright fabrication among the thousands of pages of documents that took Schmidt and van der Walt⁴ several years to research and compile...

Scoring Rhetorical Points

IN 2003, SIX YEARS BEFORE THE APPEARANCE of *Black Flame*, former *Ajoda* editor Jason McQuinn was asked by the (generally clueless and staunchly pro-Bookchin) Institute for Anarchist Studies¹¹ for a brief explanatory essay about post-left anarchism. The result was "The Incredible Lameness of Left-Anarchism,"¹² to which the IAS added an insulting four-paragraph postscript by Peter Staudenmeier. The IAS soon published a longer rejoinder from their in-house antifascist, to which I in turn responded in this journal. The following quote from Staudenmeier and my response are germane to the AK Press/Michael Schmidt discussion insofar as Staudenmeier,

some of us have noticed that AK Press' printing and distribution decisions have been responsible for helping to confuse readers about the history and philosophy of anarchism

using Leftist Common Sense, imputed a rightward drift to unspecified anarchists (unlike Reid-Ross and Stephens, who had a specific target).

Staudenmeier insists that:

anarchist militants have sometimes found a comfortable home on the extreme right end of the spectrum. Although post-left anarchists often dismiss such cases as either isolated or irrelevant, the record of anarchist crossover into far right terrain is in fact remarkably long. Among the better known examples are Georges Sorel in France, Günther Bartsch in Germany, Troy Southgate in Britain, and Bill White in the US.¹³

Like plenty of other panicky antifascists before and since, Staudenmeier over-reached; it turns out that *none* of these four examples

were anarchists. Sorel, the mythologizer of the General Strike, never referred to himself as an anarchist (almost every commentator places him within the realm of Marxism). Bartsch was a member of the Stalinist KPD until the suppression of the independent workers' uprising in East Berlin in August, 1953 (there is no indication that he subsequently become any kind of right-winger). Southgate was active in British right-wing politics for more than a decade before he tried — and mostly failed — to poach anarchists into National-Anarchism [sic] (Staudenmeier's chronology is backward). White, who flirted with anarchists for a couple of years, was an American Third Positionist.

in terms of their respective polarizing predispositions, Schmidt and AK Press were made for each other

Sorel may be "better known," but the others' insurmountable obscurity completely undermined his agenda, which was to continue policing of the boundaries of legitimate (that is, left) anarchism by identifying the allegedly inherent right-wing tendencies among anarchist primitivists as well as non-/post-left anarchists.¹⁴

My response to his scurrilous paragraph was the following:

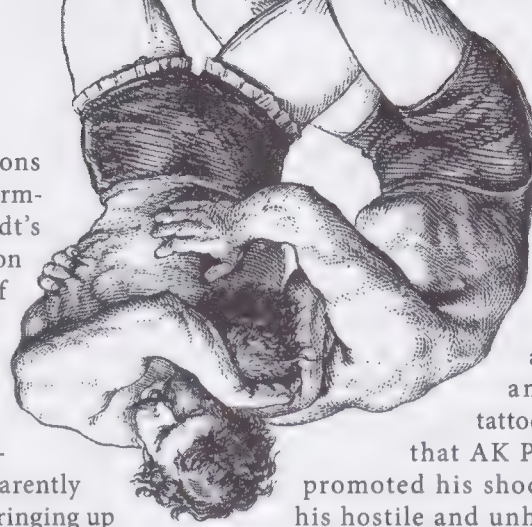
What could be more interesting ... would be tracking the "crossover" of anarchists into Leninism and Stalinism. We could begin with Robert Minor, Mao, Arshinov, Serge...¹⁵ What would we learn from examining that particular phenomenon? About as much as from examining the right-wing "crossovers": not much. People change; we cannot necessarily draw any conclusions about the strength or weakness of their later convictions by looking at those they held earlier. And it would definitely be odd to draw any conclusions at all about the political philosophies themselves based on the twists and turns of the allegiances of individual

anarchists through time. If the majority of anarchists became either fascists or Leninists, then there might be something to say, but my sense is that the majority of anarchists remain self-identified anarchists — even if their understanding of anarchism changes. Perhaps the only realistic conclusion that can be made is that those anarchists who "crossed over" were always more authoritarian than either they or their erstwhile comrades were aware. And that, of course, has nothing to do with any kind of anarchism at all.¹⁶

I bring up this up as an illustration of one left-anarchist's attempt to use posturing and conscious misdirection (using obscure examples that are difficult, if not impossible, to contradict) to prove an (ultimately unsubstantiated) allegation. Certainly left-anarchists are not the only people who flirt with this kind of intellectual dishonesty, nor is it one's adherence to left-anarchism that creates the conditions for the facile deployment of such misdirection. But they do seem to make use of such cheap tricks in their frenetic defense of the One True Anarchism.

In a more recent example, Iain McKay wrote an extensive 8-page review essay, "Victor Serge: the Worst of the Anarchists,"¹⁷ continually trying to discredit the cluster of French illegalist/individualist anarchists Serge inhabited by looking at the latter's subsequent political trajectory. Dismissing Serge and his milieu as "elitist," McKay blames his conversion into a Bolshevik (and later a Trotskyist) on the alleged deficiencies of what he considers to be a fake — again, non-syndicalist — anarchism.

The temptation to score rhetorical points for one's own tendency when engaged in inter-anarchist bickering is great. Bookchin tried it with "lifestyle" anarchists, Staudenmeier tried it with post-left anarchists, Schmidt and van der Walt tried it with "purists" like Galleani,¹⁸ and McKay tried it with individualists. Similarly (but from the other direction), Reid-Ross and Stephens imply that Schmidt's slide into unapologetic white nationalism is somehow due to his adherence to neo-Platformism — or that neo-Platformism somehow provided an easy cover for Schmidt's racism as he maneuvered his way among anarchists all over the world.



There are plenty of reasons to be skeptical of neo-Platformism,¹⁹ but Michael Schmidt's contemporaneous immersion in Stormfront isn't one of them. There are reasons to be skeptical of *every* type of anarchism, and the skillful critic should be capable of pointing them out without resorting to the transparently cheap rhetorical device of bringing up fake examples (Staudenmeier, Bookchin), or — yes — “isolated or irrelevant” examples (McKay, Reid-Ross and Stephens) of people whose relationship to anarchism is, or has become, tangential, if not lapsed.

Something Like a Conclusion

NOW THAT SCHMIDT'S CONVOLUTED explanations, excuses, and other idiocies can no longer be suppressed, various left-anarchist internet commentators²⁰ are trying to disentangle his indisputable personal failings from the research, analyses, and conclusions he drew with van der Walt in *Black Flame* (and in his more recent solo writings) — despite the chronology of Schmidt's racism being documented *before* the book went to print. Schmidt's apologists blissfully overlook any influence his concurrent shortcomings might have had on his analytical endeavors because his (and van der Walt's) conclusions happen to line up with their preferred ideological and organizational obedience to what they insolently claim to be the only suitable method of engaging in radical anti-statist class struggle.

Left-anarchists have been put in a bind through the sensationalist antics of Reid-Ross/Stephens on the side of AK's belated regret, and Schmidt's on the side of reactionary ideological stupidity. Finding Schmidt culpable for deliberately insinuating white nationalism into anarchist discourse rightly calls into question his entire written repertoire; another question is why it took AK Press so long to acknowledge and investigate the concerns of other anarchists based in South Africa. Ultimately, does it matter to non-neo-Platformist anarchists that Michael Schmidt has questionable ideas

about what constitutes authentic anarchism, questionable ideas about race and culture, questionable intentions, and questionable tattoos? Does it matter that AK Press relentlessly promoted his shoddy scholarship, his hostile and unhistoric inter-anarchist sectarianism? Isn't this internal left-anarchist frenzy largely irrelevant? Plenty of anarchists have disliked and/or rejected the *Black Flame* parallel universe from the beginning. Many have also been vocally critical of AK Press for their longstanding schismatic commercial and ideological publishing decisions. In terms of their respective polarizing predispositions, Schmidt and AK Press were, as a romantic narrator might say, made for each other. They also trapped each

there are plenty of reasons to be skeptical of neo-Platformism, but Schmidt's immersion in Stormfront isn't one of them

other; AK finally had to admit that they'd made a mistake by endorsing the factionalism in Schmidt's writings — but only because of the taint of racism, not because of his casuistic discourse. At least this time, neither side of this conflict can claim that their post-left/insurrecto/primmie/egoist/nihilist/“lifestyl-ist” rivals are to blame; this time they did it to themselves. Since this miniature scandal can only increase the mundane negative appraisal every kind of authentically radical anarchist is subject to, it is cold comfort to acknowledge that this constellation of left-anarchists have caused their own self-referential and insular corners to implode. (A)

Endnotes

- 1 Complicating matters is a difficult question more specific for left-anarchists: is there something approaching complicity among people in the same group — especially a formal membership organization — who know about a personal failing of one or more of their fellow members, and do nothing about it? So far Schmidt's buddy Lucien van der Walt has been suspiciously silent — at least under his own name; some at libcom believe he created an internet persona called Red.Black.Writings and uses it to excuse Schmidt's indiscretions.
- 2 Reid-Ross has established himself as a staunch left-anarchist writer, primarily interested in anti-oppression politics, his activism in Earth First! notwithstanding; Stephens, a board member of the Institute for Anarchist Studies, is the author of numerous useless essays and commentaries, including his recently published, and astoundingly laughable, *The Dog Walker*, a collection of observations that are — according to the back cover — “hilarious... powerful... brilliant.” One of the most ridiculous (and offensive to anyone who knows anything about dogs) is his calling certain dogs “assholes” (for peeing on a pile of wrapped presents, for dragging a stick against parked cars, for getting out of collars, etc) — as if dogs were capable of discerning that their *normal* behavior were especially annoying to particular humans, and were *further* capable of deciding to engage in them regardless of the consequences to themselves.
- 3 medium.com/@rossstephens plus the follow-up here: medium.com/@areidross
- 4 Purporting to have written a rebooted history of anarchism, the authors' premise was that the sole legitimate style of anarchism has always been class-struggle syndicalism. They thereby off-handedly excommunicated non-syndicalists, while involuntarily inducting Marxists, nationalists, and Marxist nationalists into their Broad Anarchist Tradition [sic]. It can't be both so broad and so viciously truncated at the same time; such intellectual dishonesty marked the entire book. See “Blackening Out History” in *Ajoda* #68/69 (2010).
- 5 On several occasions throughout the '90s and early '00s, I heard Kanaan declare that he was a proud sectarian; specifically, anything not promoting the self-emancipation of the working class and their taking over the (presumably intact) means of production was considered anathema. This did not get in the way of AK Press publishing and/or distributing material on animal liberation, student organizing, urban guerrilla groups, various styles of Marxism, even the ubiquitous Che t-shirt. After all, business is business...
- 6 An important opening salvo was *Listen, Anarchist!*, by Chaz Bufe (a nod toward Bookchin's 1970 *Listen, Marxist!*, which was in turn an homage to Wilhelm Reich's 1945 *Listen, Little Man!*), originally published in 1985 with revisions in '87 and 2008 (the latter with an introduction by Janet Biehl, Bookchin's ex, making the entire project come, somewhat incestuously, full circle). Bufe denounced primitivism (because of its alleged anti-work and mystical essences) and armed struggle (because of its alleged vanguardism and fetishizing of violence) as the primary obstacles to the popularity of Bufe's version of anarchism. Responses included Feral Faun's *Bourgeois Roots of Anarcho-Syndicalism* and Brian Kane's and my *Hold Your Tongue, Demagogue: Turning a Deaf Ear* (both accessible at theanarchistlibrary.org). While it is true that Bufe exclusively blamed other anarchists, his rant had the disadvantage of not being written by a known author with a wide distribution network (like AK Press), and so had limited influence — until after Seattle, when Bookchin and Biehl discovered and resurrected it as a precursor to *SALA*.
- 7 *Bookchin Breaks with Anarchism*, accessible at theanarchistlibrary.org
- 8 See the unintentionally hilarious *Anarchism, Marxism and the Future of the Left; Interviews and Essays, 1993-1998* (AK Press 2001); reviewed by me in *Ajoda* #50. As Bob Black incisively pointed out, Bookchin failed to explain how the near-destruction of American anarchism (such as it was) happened on Murray's presumably protective watch... (*Anarchy After Leftism*, CAL Press 1997; p. 13)

9 In a moment of histrionic one-upsmanship, Schmidt and van der Walt declared that Bookchin's caricature was inadequate because he accepted that his targets were "still anarchists" (*Black Flame*, p. 71).

10 It is worth repeating that Schmidt's racist internal ZACF document that Reid-Ross and Stephens have reproduced predates the publication of *Black Flame* by a year.

11 The IAS was founded in 1996 by frequent AK Press collaborator Chuck Morse; see his *Being a Bookchinite*, available at theanarchistlibrary.org

In 2010, IAS teamed up with AK Press to create the Anarchist Intervention Series. Allegedly offering books with the goal of "intervening in contemporary discussions" from "a variety of perspectives," the series is (so far at least) top-heavy with academic social justice activists; unsurprisingly, despite decades with little or nothing to show for such a strategy, their message is that anarchists should be embedded in ameliorative single-issue campaigns.

12 Available at theanarchistlibrary.org

13 "Anarchists in Wonderland: The Topsy-Turvy World of Post-Left Anarchy," Institute for Anarchist Studies, 2003; available at theanarchistlibrary.org.

14 See his ham-fisted alarmist *Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience* (AK Press, 1995), co-authored with Bookchin's partner Janet Biehl. I leave it to readers to decide whether its contemporaneous publication with SALA was an innocent coincidence.

15 Minor contributed several articles to Berkman's *The Blast* during the repression following the bombing of the Preparedness Day parade in 1916; he became a Communist in 1920, eventually becoming a member of the International Control Commission of the Comintern.

According to Edgar Snow (in *Red Star over China* [1937], Mao Zedong told him that he was influenced by anarchism when he was a student. Peter Arshinov, author of *History of the Makhnovist Movement*, had been a Bolshevik from 1904; imprisoned with Nestor Makhno, he became a devoted anarchist. They worked together closely during the flourishing of the Insurgent Army of the Ukraine until they were both forced into exile in 1921. After co-authoring the Platform with Makhno, he returned to the Soviet Union in 1930 and joined the Stalinists. Victor Serge was involved in the French illegalist/individualist milieu in the 1910s; he made his way to Russia in 1919 and immediately joined the Bolshevik Party.

16 This is a slightly altered excerpt from "On the radical virtues of being left alone; deconstructing Staudenmaier," (2004). I examined this sort of puerile argumentation in "Why I am not an Anti-Primitivist," (2010). Both available at theanarchistlibrary.org

17 *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* #61; Winter, 2014

18 The authors of *Black Flame* couldn't dare dispute Galleani's incontrovertible adherence to anarchist-communism, so they had to get their dismissal in by misdirecting readers' attention to his and his followers' principled refusal to create formal organizations.

19 Critical responses (both from the time the Platform was written as well as more recent appraisals) are available at theanarchistlibrary.org

20 See especially the 800-plus (from October to December) comments at libcom.org/forums/general/ak-press-says-michael-schmidt-fascist-25092015; a more recent apologia (because "Schmidt's books...have been so useful for the anarchist movement") comes from (ex-?)Marxist Wayne Price: anarkismo.net/article/28923

TRANSGRESSIVE CRIME FICTION AND NOIR

LACK OF ORDER AND RESOLUTION

BY RICHARD GODWIN
RICHARDGODWIN.NET

MORAL COMPROMISE IS A PHASE I often think about when writing Noir fiction, and at least two of the authors I will discuss are undeniably Noir. Noir, the genre of losers, of serial mistakes, seductions, men and women in bars on the wrong side of town. Noir characters are not necessarily criminals, but are led to transgressions. Transgressive literature is seen as the art of the rebel, of those who break taboos, who seek out the extraordinary, of men and women who redefine aberrations as moral necessities.

This body of literature depends for its identity on those works that fracture the norm, since they attempt to re-establish a dialogue with literary history. Transgressive literature exists as a renewing force that mitigates against stasis. It is arguable that we are looking at the dialogue between the literature of obedience and the literature of transgression, and the former adheres to the dictates of its readers. Eros's message is that dissatisfaction lives within the closed ranks of the obedient.

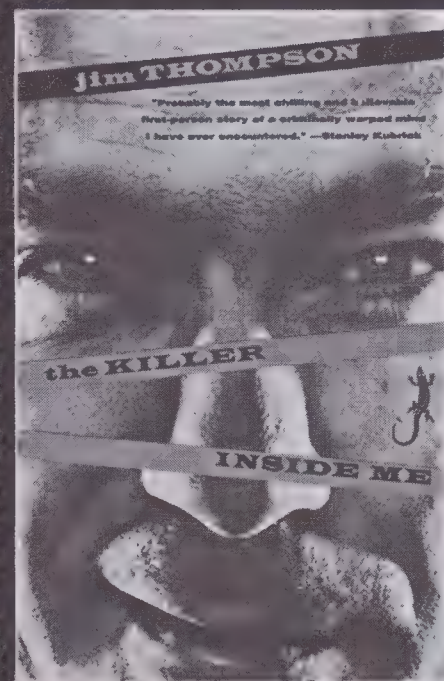
Crime fiction is in many ways redemptive; the killer gets shot, arrested, justice is thereby restored. It often relies on a heroism that props up prevailing moral standards or the lack of them. It is arguably a literature of appeasement, heightening readers' fears to offer consoling words at the end. It frequently sanitises

crime, but not always. The authors surveyed below do not. Transgressive crime fiction lacks restoration, subverting order, and providing a certain element of realism in its place. It resists resolutions and offers uneasy endings.

In literature, as in other art forms, there are a series of tensions that are not new, and that predate genre. I use the Nietzschean dialogue between Dionysian and Apollonian energies to explore four key transgressive novels within the genre in relation to how it dramatises the disorder presented by crime and how it resolves its threat. With Apollo representing law and Dionysus chaos, crime fiction is built on a fundamental friction between the two and, given the fact that the body of most crime novels consists of a criminal uprising, the seductive appeal of crime is implicit within it.

Friedrich Nietzsche discussed the tragic form as based on a dichotomy between the old Greek gods Apollo and Dionysus. In "The Birth of Tragedy" he wrote:

we have considered the Apollonian and its opposite, the Dionysian, as artistic energies which burst forth from nature herself ... first in the world of dreams, whose completeness is not dependent upon the intellectual attitude or the artistic culture of any single being; and then as intoxicated reality...



The Killer Inside Me (1952)
by Jim Thompson

THE STORY IS TOLD THROUGH THE EYES of its protagonist, Lou Ford, a 29-year-old deputy sheriff in a small Texas town. Ford is a cunning, depraved sociopath with sadistic tastes. He falls into a sadomasochistic relationship with a prostitute named Joyce Lakeland. Ford describes their affair as unlocking "the

sickness" that has plagued him since adolescence. The term refers loosely to his need to inflict his brand of sadism on his victims, and he does so under the guise of deputy sheriff. The most significant cultural issue the novel attacks is that of law and order.

In challenging many of the certainties of the 1950s, Thompson subverts the notion of the law abiding sheriff, the nature of law enforcement itself, of criminality, the idea of safety, and the existence of justice in a predatory world. He raises the spectre of the frontier, of virgin land open to the violations of law-makers. The novel erodes the expected antithesis of criminal/ law enforcer and explores the pathological motivations for criminality and its erotic drives.

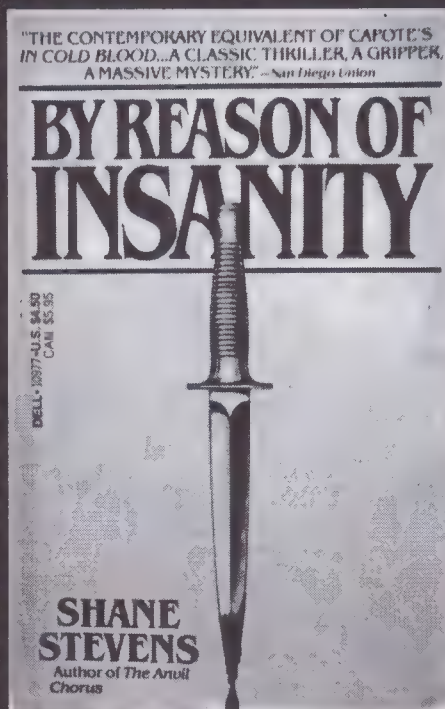
There is desire in Ford's crimes, a desire he needs to hide. This is transgressive Noir. Noir is the genre of the morally compromised, and it explores the flawed characters of men and women who cross the lines that criminalise them. They are not necessarily recidivists, although in the case of Lou Ford, he is, but the people he preys on are lured across a line into that zone Noir so often explores for its dramatic tensions. Ford corrupts as he violates. His behaviour is Dionysian, an indulgence in sexual extremes that are protected — even licensed — by his position, and his role is pure veneer since he antagonises the Apollonian order. It is for these reasons I insist that it is one of the most subversive crime novels ever written.

A novel out of its time, it went straight for the throat of placid banalities about small town America, offering the reader an uncomfortable element of voyeurism

in its narration by a sadistic killer. It is an exploration of lack of order within a system that purports to maintain justice. It is a novel of psychological realism and also a dramatisation of the erotic appeal of disorder when authority is used to exploit and pornographise. In this sense it enacts the basic sadomasochistic relationship that informs authoritarian power structures. Take Ford and place

the novel: "It's not legal, but I found out long ago that the place where the law is apt to be abused most is right around a courthouse."

The Killer Inside Me not only transgresses notions of law and order, it fragments them and uses a psychopathic narrator to hand the reader the broken pieces while talking of the erotic buzz he gets from contravening the legal structure he is sworn to uphold. While Ford struggles to hide his identity from others, the next novel I will be talking about challenges the notion of identity itself.



By Reason of Insanity (1979) by Shane Stevens

MANY MAY NEVER HAVE HEARD OF Shane Stevens, about whom little is known. He is the author of six novels, among them *Dead City*, a gritty and unflinchingly realistic crime novel. He also wrote under the name J W Rider. At some point, Stevens vanished from the public eye. I recently interviewed the man who is writing his biography, and have a rare picture of the author on my website. Rumour has it that he may be working as a Hollywood script doctor. *By Reason Of Insanity* made him the most money.

It is the first serial killer novel that examines identity and criminality in relation to upbringing and genetics. Stevens plunges the reader into a criminal whirlwind that the law is unable to contain since the protagonist, the killer, is engaged in identity theft. This is the first instance I know of in a crime novel where a criminal uses identity theft to evade the police. The idea goes to the

him in a death camp and he would have found his milieu; he enforces obedience for reasons that are mainly sexual, while enforcing the law as a dictator without a country, a small town man hiding behind a badge. As Ford says in

transgressive literature is seen as the art of the rebel, of those who break taboos, who seek out the extraordinary, of men and women who redefine aberrations as moral necessities

core of criminality since the protagonist exploits others' identities to kill.

Thomas Bishop is conceived by a woman who is convinced he is the product of a rape by real-life killer Caryl Chessman. She abuses Thomas as he grows up and, as revenge, he kills and eats her, and is subsequently sent to a mental asylum. He escapes and, using

verifies our social existence, insurance documents, and so on. Bishop utilises these to hide for as long as possible so that he may continue to go about mutilating and murdering. He is subverting the system that is intended to ensure legality and to monitor citizens, and he is doing it to prey on them.

In many ways Bishop represents the high of criminal fame. Bishop's killing spree is an orgy of violence, an enactment of years of repressed fury directed at a society that has excluded and imprisoned him. His ability to assume a Protean form enables him to engage in acts that would get another killer caught, but he has wrong-footed the cops. Bishop's killings are informed by a heightened state of near erotic ecstasy that is pure intoxicated reality. I say *near* because he is disgusted by sex, the result of his mother's love. Allowing himself the momentary ability to be who he really is, he finds identity in the assumption of those of others. What he wants is the acknowledgement that he exists. He is in pursuit of a self. The Dionysian always offers a high. It is Adam Kenton, a reporter who tracks Bishop down and writes perceptively of him:

the body of a fellow inmate who resembles him, and whom he has killed during The escape, tricks the police into believing he has been killed. As a bond, he had previously convinced the inmate to place a scar on his body in the same place as he had done on himself. He smashes the inmate's face in with an axe, removing his teeth with it, making his face unrecognisable. And so the hunt for the wrong man begins.

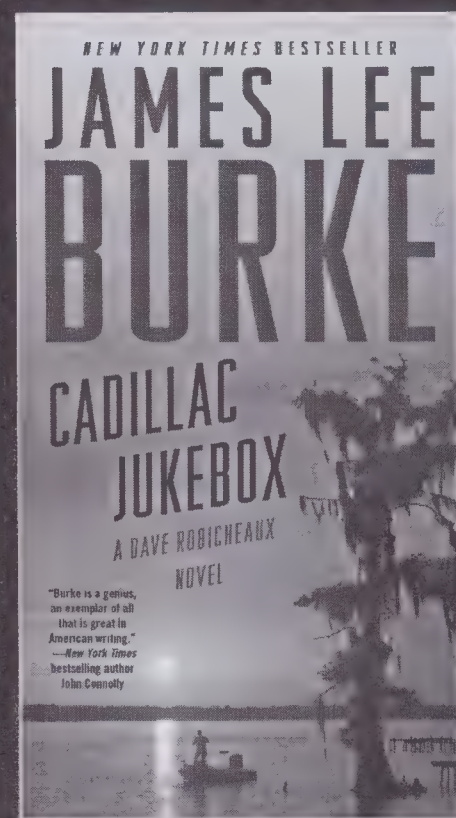
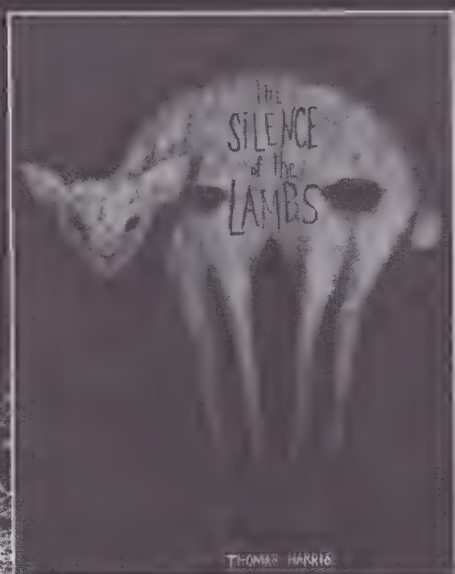
Stevens's transgression is based in the narrative exposition of a psychopathic personality, an acute internal characterisation that spares few details in the descriptions of the killing spree Thomas Bishop embarks on. It is the fact that he is using the identities of other people that is so subversive, since it threatens all the certainties that much of the idea of our identity is based on: the paperwork that

You want recognition? I mean real recognition? Your life story in all the papers, your face on television all over the country. Books written about you; what you eat, what you feel, what you think, what you don't think. Maybe even a movie about you. Why not? They made movies about all the killers and maniacs I've mentioned, including Chessman. If that's what you want, it's easy. Just go out and kill some people. They don't have to be presidents, they don't have to be big shots. Just kill enough to make a big splash in the papers.

The novel suggests that the media encourages and thrives on transgressions. Since he lives in others' skins, Bishop's high is a prolonged homicidal tour of the United States. He is a fore-runner of another famous psychopath.

The Silence of the Lambs (1988) by Thomas Harris

THOMAS HARRIS'S CHARACTER Hannibal Lecter represents not only transgression, but an extreme form of pathology that he manages to convey as reason. As such, he confronts notions of health and illness. Lecter undermines legal order. His ability to reason out his impulses and to analyse the pathology of others places him firmly on the rational side of pathological, and he subverts the accepted dialogue between ideas of criminality and normality that inform much crime fiction. He embodies the Dionysian, with Clarice Starling being a fragile operative of the Apollonian system. Order is upheld, but at a sacrificial price. Lecter manipulates the investigation and makes a study of agent Starling that is the beginning of a subversive relationship with the FBI operative. It may be sexual in nature, but is certainly a means of infiltrating the efficacy of the bureau. Lecter seduces her



during the course of *The Silence Of The Lambs* and *Hannibal* (1999). Harris shows Starling's objectification by the institution she works for, an obedient cog in need of transgressive energies. Lecter's attraction to Starling is both physical and predatory, but ultimately she is an agent of the law he despises and whose idiocies and hypocrisies he skillfully exposes. Lecter is the embodiment of Dionysian appeal to a bureaucratic system that fails victims. When genre grows weary of its own internal discourse, it requires fragmentation; transgression may be built into its DNA. Identity is at the core of much transgressive literature, with characters testing their own moral limits. As Lecter says to Starling:

We rarely get to prepare ourselves in meadows or on graveled walks; we do it on short notice in places without windows, hospital corridors, rooms like this lounge with its cracked plastic sofa and Cinzano ashtrays, where the café curtains cover blank concrete. In rooms like this, with so little time, we prepare our gestures, get them by heart so we can do them when we're frightened in the face of Doom.

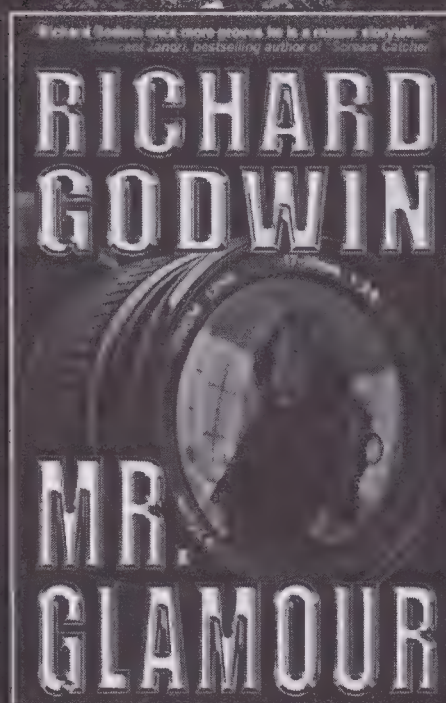
Lecter remains unreadable to Starling. He exists in transgression and ushers in the subversive notion that to understand him and to catch him you have to join him and become like him. This is the ultimate puncturing of the law's need for distance from crime, of the analyst's need for a detachment that allows for moral security. In terms of literary history, he may be the last great monster written, the epitome of the transgressive character.

Cadillac Jukebox (1996) by James Lee Burke

TWO TRANSGRESSIVE COPS ARE THE dual protagonists in James Lee Burke's novel. The pairing of Dave Robicheaux and Clete Purcell is a tight embodiment of the dialogue between the Dionysian and Apollonian. Purcell, while a law enforcer, has a rap sheet longer than many criminals, while Robicheaux has to try to rein in his partner's behaviour as he strays across the line into crime. And Robicheaux is more than capable of equalling his friend's violence. The Apollonian, while seeking order often inflicts systemic violence. There is no resolution, only punishment; revenge is lawless justice in an unjust world, fitting for a novelist who dramatises the enduring nature of the frontier in the American psyche.

Dave Robicheaux is fighting a hierarchy involving wealth and connection. While seeking justice for a man he believes to have been wrongly imprisoned, Robicheaux is faced with the machinations of political candidate Buford LaRose. LaRose's wife is intent on either seducing Robicheaux and compromising him, or destroying his reputation if he doesn't help her husband. Burke places his protagonist in an ongoing situation of injustice, invoking the satisfaction of the revenge tragedy. There is the sense in his fictions that the justice system is deeply flawed. Robicheaux says,

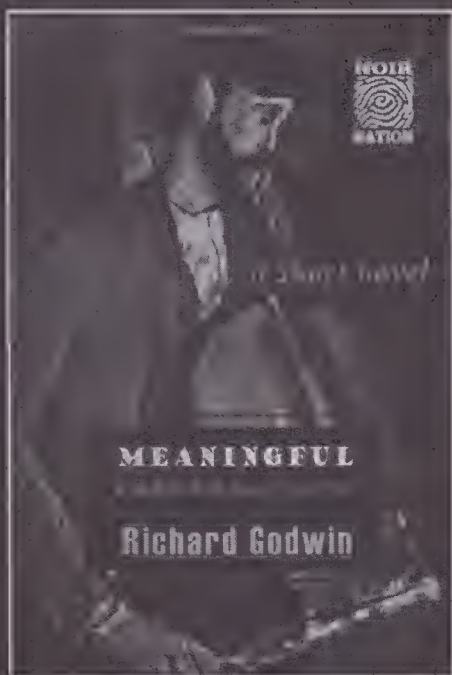
As a police officer you accept the fact that, in all probability, you will become the instrument that delivers irreparable



harm to a variety of individuals. Granted, they design their own destinies, are intractable in their attitudes, and live with the asp at their breast, but the fact remains that it is you who will appear at some point in their lives....

He frequently comments on the lack of justice in society. The injustice he suffers pushes him to transgress as a police officer, and his partner Purcell often transgresses for him. Robicheaux and Purcell know what makes criminals and they embody Jung's theory that great detectives have strong criminal shadows. Burke transgresses moral certainties through two characters who cross legal

Thomas Harris's character Hannibal Lecter represents not only transgression, but an extreme form of pathology that he manages to convey as reason... he confronts notions of health and illness, and undermines legal order



lines to obtain justice, often committing crimes to do so.

AS AN AUTHOR OF CRIME FICTION myself, I have inherited, perhaps unconsciously, what I am describing. My two most transgressive novels are *Mr. Glamour* and *Meaningful Conversations*.

Mr. Glamour (2012)

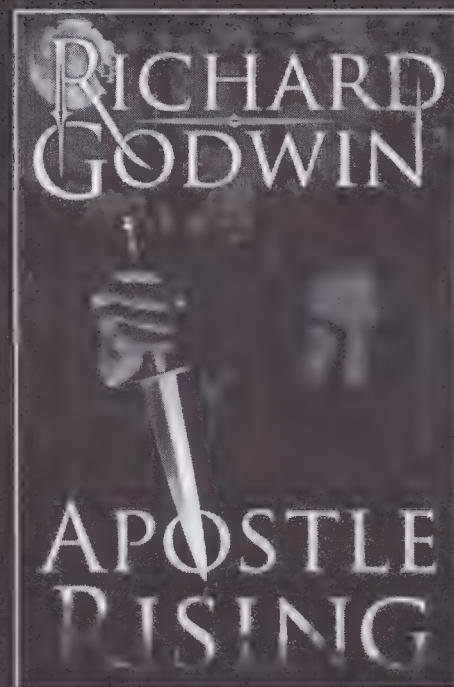
MR. GLAMOUR IS ABOUT A GROUP OF wealthy beautiful people who are hooked on designer goods and become the prey of a killer obsessed with brands and branding. At the centre of the investigation are two cops who both harbour criminal tendencies. DCI Jackson Flare

and Inspector Mandy Steele both cross the line of legality. Flare violates a prisoner's rights in pursuit of justice for a rape victim, while Steele, disturbed by what the killer is doing, enters into a dark sexual journey to allay her own sexual past. This leads her to experiment with hypoxia at the suggestion of her dubious and morally compromised boyfriend.

Meaningful Conversations (2014)

MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS IS transgressive on numerous levels. The protagonist, Bertrand Mavers, famous cellist and predator, is the most well-adjusted character in the book: a sane killer in an insane world. The novel is satirical; while it contains a series of crimes committed by Bertrand Mavers (who is abducting people and taking them to a place called The Farm), it is also an exploration of the nature of sanity as determined by a world reliant on control programmes and virtual experience. Otto Wall, a therapist, calls Bertrand the sanest man he knows.

The novel's transgression lies in its satire. Bertrand, who is also the narrator, involves the reader in his skewed vision of the nature of reality. He is creating his own paradigm. His is the intoxicated reality behind Sartre's *Nausea*. Bertrand's view of the world is beyond alienation. It is clear that his perceptions are disconnected from those around him, and he has transgressed the known world, the world of shared perceptions, as he tries to replace it with his transgressive paradigm. In a scene where he is the dinner guest of Otto Wall — who may be treating all the characters, but we will



never know — Bertrand looks around the dinner party and what he sees is distinct from what seems to be taking place. His perceptions are a subversion of the reality presented to him:

Otto puts some music on and chatters about health. But all I can hear is the miniature beating of a child's heart. It is the threnody of the amniotic prison. It is the pulse beyond the room. We dwell in decay, static guests in Otto's cave, lost in his endless waiting room, shuffling papers, stuttering our words as if through broken lungs. The sac is opening, like a pair of lips. It mumbles at me as the dinner guests talk on, their thin faces filled with food. I wonder if all pleasure has been perpetually lost to the lawful.

Bertrand pursues his pleasures in an entirely Dionysian way; he transgresses the Apollonian dictate and suggests there may, in fact, be no order at all

Bertrand pursues his pleasures in an entirely Dionysian way. He transgresses the Apollonian dictate and suggests there may, in fact, be *no order at all*.

Apostle Rising (2010)

MY FIRST NOVEL, *APOSTLE RISING* (2010), is transgressive in that it is a police procedural that does not offer resolution. My latest publication, the novella *Paranoia And The Destiny Programme* (2015) concerns enforced transgression. It is about the narrator, Dale Helix, who may be paranoid or telling the truth when he says he is the object of a totalitarian experiment aimed at studying the link between serial killers and dictators. He claims that this is an experiment that is forcing him to kill. His crimes are impersonal, because they are programmed. His personal transgression within the dystopia he inhabits is to try to see the truth. As Dale says of the destiny programme, "I see no butterfly wings in the Rorschach test, but a mountain of bones. They try to hide Golgotha, but they can't blind me any more."

Transgressive fiction is Dionysian, and the Dionysian is the life blood that flows through its rebellious veins. It also needs the antagonism of the Apollonian. If genres did not evolve, they would remain static recipients of their culture. They would have no commentary. Narratives need to interpret and redefine their cultures, and transgressive fictions do exactly that. (A)



An Excerpt From



Lies Retold

by Elle Dee



» Synopsis

Henry West, Military Intelligence operative, may be in over his head this time. When a dormant and almost forgotten group of international terrorists announces their return to the world stage,

West is charged with finding and eliminating them. His first challenge is admitting that the all-female cell wreaking havoc on bioengineering and petrochemical technologies is not only competent, but brilliant.

As his investigation continues, he comes face to face with the realities of industrial civilization and those whose declared mission is nothing short of destroying it. The closer he gets to the answers, the more entangled – and possibly compromised – he and his counter-terrorist team become. In the web of violence and resistance he now inhabits, he starts to feel overwhelmed by the capabilities and reach of the so-far invulnerable eco-terrorists, who always seem to be at least one step ahead of him and the government he represents.

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AMELIA SCHEDULED OUR TRIP FOR four days later [...] In the interim, I met with experts on domestic terrorism in other government branches. They answered my questions about philosophies, profiles, and tactics of terrorists readily enough, but tended to get miffed when I couldn't give them any details in return. Sensing this could cause trouble in the future, I was liberal with my praise, and bought a few expensive lunches to keep the intra-agency irritation at a minimum, and keep the ideas flowing.

I also interviewed a half dozen undercover agents assigned to various radical groups. In contrast to the experts, they tended to be glad to share their work. From what I learned from them, two groups stood out as sharing many of the presumed ethics and tactics of *Âme Noir*: the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and the Autonomous League. It was as good a place as any to start looking.

Along with the names of active and inactive members of the two groups, their addresses, copies of computer files, and phone and email records, the undercovers brought me copies of all the radical propaganda they had collected. I passed the files and records on to our analysts to ferret out anything useful, but I took on the pamphlets and "zines," and gave myself a crash course in the Do It Yourself (DIY) publishing world. The philosophies and tactics were all over the map. Everything from running collective factories to hunting and gathering, and financially crippling multi-national corporations. I'd never wanted to know how to give a woman an herbal abortion, but I found out.

AS AMELIA PREDICTED, IT WAS A RELIEF to get out of the office. It was the last few days of August, but spring was still in my veins.

We were in a cornfield in Kansas. The crop was taller than I was and smelled like green grass and honey, not quite ripe. It was warm, and I had a strong urge to take off my shirt and shoes, drink in the sun through my skin, and dig my feet into the soil. Unfortunately I was not alone, or at least not alone with the particular person who inspired that vernal feeling. Also, there were too many dead insects littering the ground, or I should say "vectors." In fact, the purpose of us hiking through the rows was to observe the abundance and variety of insect corpses.

We were getting an official tour of a classified genetically modified crop. After having examined the decaying exoskeletons at the outset, I tried not to think about the multitude of many-legged bodies and crumpled wings which I continued to crush under my boots—hemolymph sticking yellow-green and a little too noticeable against the black. It was a long walk, and I was trying to enjoy it.

Our party consisted of Amelia, myself, and four others from our office, including my favorite analyst. She had just returned from a restroom break and looked pink-cheeked and pretty. She glanced at me as the lecture wore on, and I rolled my eyes then winked. She rewarded me with a mischievous smile, her brown eyes sparkling in that now familiar way. I wondered what clever thing I could say if I edged around to her side of the group. I tried to remember if Dorothy had brown eyes, or if that was Toto. Then I realized I still wasn't sure if her name was Claire or Clara, and that slowed me down considerably.

While I sorted out my thoughts, the head botanist continued his long-winded, self-congratulatory monologue by explaining the difficulties they had

overcome in developing a corn plant that produced a focused spectrum pesticide, which targeted the traditional primary, secondary, and tertiary vectors of *Zea mays*, (aka corn). We were supposed to be impressed by this accomplishment. Surprisingly (for the scientific community), the experiment was a little too successful, and was taking out some other insects. There was also some concern that a fourth vector may be emerging—one that had not typically been considered a problem for corn. They were giddy at the hopes of refining the strain further. Funds were being allocated.

When she could, Amelia peppered in seemingly random questions about everything from fertilizer to field security, and their hiring process. I took scattered notes, but was not overly impressed by their approach to farming.

"What do you think?" I was a little startled to hear Claire-Clara's whisper at my elbow.

"It's not how I farm." I whispered back. Her hair smelled like lavender.

Her shoulder brushed against mine as she asked, "What do you do about the vectors at your farm?"

"We're certified organic, so we use predator insects, traps and organic pesticides, but only if we have to. We mostly rely on crop rotation, companion planting, and healthy soil and plants." I was proud to not have to say we were transitional farming anymore; it had taken almost a decade to get certified, but it was finally done.

"I think I'd rather eat the vegetables from your farm." I chuckled my approval.

I ignored Amelia's annoyed glance, and leaned closer. "I wouldn't give you what we sell commercially. The best we have is grown in the kitchen garden. We have heirlooms and special varieties that make supermarket produce taste like cardboard."

"Mmm. My lunch sounds so much less appetizing now," she smiled.

"I'll have to do something about that," I smiled back.

We stood next to each other silently after that, and I gazed at the wide blue sky. In passing, I found myself wondering how such a field could be attacked discriminately. I had just decided planes wouldn't work, and as I brought my gaze earthward I noticed several dozen orange and black butterflies hovering over the heads of the crops. As I watched them flutter, a little hypnotized by the warm sunshine and serenity of the surroundings, they infused my thoughts. "Verses On A Butterfly" by Joseph Warton came to mind:

*Fair Child of Sun and Summer! we behold
With eager eyes thy wings bedropp'd with gold;
The purple spots that o'er thy mantle spread,
The sapphire's lively blue, the ruby's red,
Ten thousand various blended tints surprise,
Beyond the rainbow's hues or peacock's eyes:
Not Judah's king in eastern pomp array'd,
Whose charms allur'd from far the Sheban maid,
High on his glitt'ring throne, like you could shine
(Nature's completest miniature divine):
For thee the rose her balmy buds renews,
And silver lilies fill their cups with dews;
Flora for thee the laughing fields perfumes,
For thee Pomona sheds her choicest blooms,
Soft Zephyr wafts thee on his gentlest gales
O'er Hackwood's sunny hill and verdant vales;
For thee, gay queen of insects! do we rove
From walk to walk, from beauteous grove to grove;
And let the critics know, whose pedant pride
And awkward jests our sprightly sport deride:
That all who honour, fame, or wealth pursue,
Change but the name of things—they hunt for you.*

I realized how painfully I wanted to repeat these lines in whispers to Claire-Clara, and then distrusted this desire and said nothing. I distracted myself by trying to recall the symbolism of butterflies. I knew they represented spring, transformation, and the mating of souls. I thought I remembered reading about departed souls returning in the form of butterflies to visit loved ones. Or did they only return to help you die? Or did they just hover over corpses looking for something to eat? I suppressed a shudder,

also realizing these butterflies might be doomed by the insecticidal corn. I felt a little frustrated with myself for turning their beauty grotesque, and thought maybe I needed a cool drink. I was about to excuse myself and head to the bathroom...

Then, it happened.

The corn started wilting. It was hard to see at first, since corn affects a droopy appearance to begin with, but when they started turning golden, and then brown, and then falling over, there was no denying it. Within a few minutes we were standing in an open field, surrounded by flattened, dead corn. Someone laughed, "Is it supposed to do that?" I was too distracted to note who said it.

I think Amelia was the only one whose mouth wasn't hanging open. Her lips were compressed in a fine white line. I whistled, and said something like, "Corn that kills itself along with all the insects. You're going to need a really good ad campaign to sell this one." My analyst laughed, and I felt clever for about ten seconds.

BY THE END OF THE DAY ALL OF US, including the botanist, got searched, interrogated, harassed, threatened, and then thrown into cells that don't exist. The National Guard was sure it had to be someone in our group who was responsible for the attack on the crop, especially because otherwise it was their security which was in question. My little joke, which everyone dutifully reported, made me their prime suspect.

Over the next week we were given polygraph tests, searched for tattoos, and had our backgrounds and loved-ones examined minutely. We weren't allowed to see each other, send notes to anyone, and there was no pretense of allowing attorneys anywhere near us. We were fed sparingly, and not allowed much uninterrupted sleep. By the end of the fourth night I was almost willing to confess I was a female agent of *Âme Noir*, especially when I thought it would get me a cup of coffee or a good night's rest. ④

An Excerpt From *Homuncula* by John Henri Nolette

» Synopsis

What do Luigi Galleani, John D. Rockefeller, H. P. Lovecraft, and "Typhoid Mary" have in common? Robert Henry Pearce. His story, as he wanders through early 20th century New England is the tale of his struggles to discover the source of his strange hunger and feelings of abject alienation from the world of regular people. The more he gives in to his hunger, the more he allows himself to experience an abnormal enhancement of his senses, the more he finds others like himself – the more he is forced to admit and come to terms with the other-worldly origins of his feelings of not belonging. But each new revelation comes with further horrors, and Pearce is drawn not only to others' physical and psychic aberrations, but also to uncanny geographical (and possibly interplanetary) anomalies that will take him to the brink of insanity.

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MY NAME IS ROBERT HENRY PEARCE. I was born on November 29th, 1897 in the village of Southwick, in the hill country west of Springfield, Massachusetts. My father (who died in a sanitarium when I was four years old) was then just a traveling musician happily married to my mother, a girl of 16, who worked as a clerk. I was their only child (or so they said) and apparently without cousins, aunts, uncles, or grandparents on either side. It seemed improbable to me that I had no living relatives and yet I accepted these declarations without question and tried to believe them in earnest.

I received what I would call a liberal education, was given the usual moral instruction, immersed in the various mores, codes, and taboos of my people. I recall that I was taught to care a great deal about "being good" and was prompted to concern myself with such things as "the Greater Good," "the Truth," and "the condition of my eternal soul." I was encouraged to do things that were for "the benefit of humanity," to study Medicine, or Law, or to create some artistic masterpiece. However, I sensed that this was not for me. Right from the start, it was evident that something was absent. Something was not quite right.

I am told that from earliest childhood I was "chronically morose" and "awkward" and I do recall quite distinctly, from as early as four and five years of age, that even my own mother seemed to find my presence repulsive and unnerving. Those who knew me generally spoke ill of me and even the neighbors remained aloof. To them, it must have seemed that I was nothing more than the half-wit son of a man who had gone mad, and one of my earliest memories was the painful realization that I was regarded by my own people as a kind of living tragedy. I did

not "belong," the children at school used to say, and in my heart, I knew they were right. I was always hungry, always restless, always daydreaming. I was unaccountably dissatisfied with the society of human beings and it made me nervous and irritable. I remember a strange and desperate feeling that there was somewhere else I was supposed to be, some other life that I was supposed to be living... though I could not have described it even if I had been asked to do so. There was something inside of me, some appetite or craving that I could not name or identify, which seemed to haunt me and set me apart.

To all this there was the added problem of certain anatomical abnormalities which seemed to underscore my strangeness. First, there was curious discoloration upon the iris of my left eye, a brownish stain which covered the area directly above my pupil, so that my mostly blue eyes were not so much dissimilar to each other, as they were noticeably mismatched. Second, there had been some sort of trouble with my mouth, something oddly amiss with the size, shape, and arrangement of my teeth. They had grown in too long and thick for my mouth and with a curious tendency to twist, sometimes even curling around each other. This deformity was so serious as to require corrective surgery, though the memory of this is dim as I was still quite young. Furthermore, my head was unusually large for my body and I walked with a noticeable stoop, my head thrust forward at an angle which most people seemed to find brutish and uncouth.

In addition to these minor deformities, I also suffered peculiar physical symptoms which seemed to correspond oddly with certain mental impressions I had. My stomach, though full, would frequently cramp as if from a tremendous hunger, as if my body were being

deprived of some vital nutrient or mineral which it desperately needed. At these times I also suffered mild auditory and visual hallucinations, as well as recurring bouts of insomnia. These frequent physical ailments robbed me of any sociability I may have otherwise possessed and, since they also prevented me from participating in any form of youthful play, my fate as a recluse was sealed.

[...]

The doctors to whom my mother took me were universally baffled by my symptoms and yet, like some laboratory rat, I was made to ingest all manner of pills, powders, and awful tasting draughts, all designed to correct my numerous aberrations. Once properly dosed, I was routinely interrogated, cross-examined, and made to describe the confusing and eerie side effects of said drugs. I recall that these experiences frightened me terribly and I withdrew inside myself, becoming less and less cooperative as I entered adolescence. As guarded as I already was, I grew even more disingenuous toward my mother, my many doctors, and towards the society that silently condoned these medical procedures. I constructed a mask, a disguise which I hid behind and I learned quickly how to lie, placate, and hide my symptoms from the world.

I engaged in this subterfuge for several years, until eventually the visits to the doctors became less and less frequent and I was, in due time, left to myself. This was my coming of age, seventeen pitiful and lonely years, made all the worse by the fact that I continued to be plagued by that gnawing hunger in my guts (though I remained mercifully ignorant of what I hungered for).

Outwardly, my disguise was complete. I did what I was told. I finished school, graduated alongside my peers and sought employment in the nearby port city of Plymouth. Day after day, I went into the great belching factories along the wharf until at last I found employment at the

Plymouth Cordage factory, feeding bales of hemp into a machine at nine dollars a week. I was lucky to have found such work at this time, for unemployment was then at epidemic proportions. The streets were crowded with immigrants fresh off the boats from Italy, Russia and elsewhere, hungry and desperate for any kind of work and willing to work for almost nothing. With the money I earned at the Cordage, I was able to move out of my childhood home in Southwick and rent a small room in Plymouth, a picturesque nook in a boarding house, with a tiny circular window overlooking an adjacent park. For a period of about eight months my various symptoms



seemed to go into a kind of remission and for the first time in my life I began to experience what others might call true joy and contentment.

* * * *

THIS CONTENTMENT, HOWEVER, WAS short-lived as I soon began to notice an increasing sense of social unrest in the factory where I worked and in the streets outside my window. The Great War in Europe was, at this time, just getting underway and all over America "Preparedness" was the watchword of the day. Newspaper accounts of the spectacular (and ongoing) Zeppelin attacks against London had so shocked the sensibilities of the man-in-the-street that many had slipped into an eerie state of submissive,

flag-waving stupefaction. In the weeks and months that followed, the government organized Patriot Parades and Preparedness demonstrations designed to instill in the youth a thirst for German blood and a desire to go to war.

But while jingoism appeared to be at a fever pitch, I was surprised to learn that many of the people with whom I worked were actually against the war, even against the entire economic system that it represented. Occasionally, in smoky gin joints and rented halls, I attended lectures and listened to speakers who brought to light the true nature of the capitalist system.

"America is going to shed oceans of blood and heap mountains of human sacrifices!" I heard one anti-war orator shout. "Europe is in a blaze with twelve million men engaged in the most frightful butchery the world has ever known... and why? For what? To fatten the wallets of a few already rich men!"

They called the war a "millionaire's game," "a power struggle of the imperialist powers," with workers serving as cannon fodder, so that it was absurd to favor one side over the other. This war was not (as many seemed to think) evidence of some tragic flaw in human nature, nor

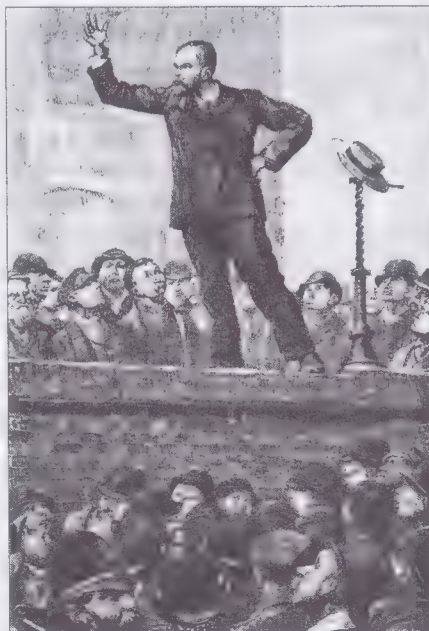
some unintentional mismanagement of foreign affairs (as the politicians implied)... but rather an integral part of every government's reason for existing; ever-expanding systematic domination. War, in fact, is the very health of the state, they said, so that it was quite incoherent to oppose the war without also opposing the entire political machine, of which it is a mere extension. "It's not just the war that must be stopped," they said, "but the entire economic system which rewards greed, exploitation and cruelty, appealing to and rewarding the very worst of human tendencies. The entire class structure that enables such calculated waste of life and limb must be razed to the ground! Not just on the battlefield but in the mines and in the factories and on the farms!" To the anarchists (for that is what these people called themselves),

the politicians and the millionaires they represented were "a race of parasites," a "reptile brood" who would never stop trying to expand their own wealth and power. They want a hive-like slave world where the great masses of impoverished humanity are slowly worked to death in the name of Industry, profits, and something they called Progress.

And these words had the ring of truth to my ears, for all over Massachusetts workers were striking. In Plymouth, Milford, Hopedale, Lawrence, and countless other cities, striking workers, fighting for a living wage, were being beaten back by police batons and jailed or deported without so much as a trial. New laws were being passed every day it seemed: imposing curfews, forbidding large public gatherings, and criminalizing any person who spoke out against the war or was critical of the government. Regularly we heard stories of government agents and police rounding up "radicals," beating them with clubs, smashing their printing presses, and shipping them off to Russia... all for the crime of printing a newspaper which laid their system bare. Peaceful unarmed May Day marchers were being clubbed in the streets by company militias in plain-clothes while nearby policemen stood around and did nothing. And all of this was being overseen and enforced by strange new government ministries and offices, agencies which none of us had ever heard of before. I recall that at a nearby factory in Hopedale several outspoken persons had mysteriously vanished while in police custody. This sort of thing only added fuel to the fire that was already raging.

I was, at first, rather amazed to hear such things said aloud but I quickly understood that I was surrounded by a very different class of people than I'd ever been permitted to mingle with. With growing interest, I sought to learn all that I could from the many disparate people around me, reading newspapers with names like *The Blast*, *Alarm!*, *Lucifer*, and *Nihil*.

These ideas impressed me deeply, reflecting back to me in a clarified way, many of my own private conclusions. I had long felt that society (and perhaps civilization as well) was organized in such a way as to bring out the very worst in man and that the war was just an obvious example of the stupidity



and cruelty that was more or less everywhere, at all levels of society. Standing in a mass of four to five thousand angry working people, listening to these fiery speeches, it was not hard to imagine that someday soon our numbers might become sufficient to successfully attack the many government buildings and company headquarters located throughout the city, and burn them to the ground. Such an event, I must admit, would not have been objectionable to me in the least. On the contrary, after eighteen years of being bullied, lied to, and experimented on by countless agents of control, I rather looked forward to such an opportunity.

So, I suppose, in some embarrassing way, I finally felt as though I had found my people though I remained on the edges of this milieu, necessarily, mostly as an observer. For even among

the radical people who attended these lectures there was vehement disagreement on almost every point imaginable. Speakers were often shouted down and replaced by their detractors. For example, some were morally opposed to the use of violence while others said it was "the only way." Some said the system could be reformed while others said there was no sane reason why it should exist at all. These discussions fascinated me. At the time I remember agreeing with the more militant point of view. What better way to strike at the arrogant money-men than to bring the very carnage they inflicted so willfully onto others right to their own doorsteps? The pacifist argument simply didn't make sense to me as I could not see it leading to anything but total extermination, sooner or later.

The vicious and deadly process of weeding out subversives had already begun. To this end, the cops employed guns, billyclubs, paddywagons and hired mobs. They used guile and subterfuge when dealing with us. It seemed obvious to me that we would need to be comparably set up.

At this time, several bombings at the homes of prominent industrialists in New York and Boston had already occurred, and by the spring of 1915 they showed no signs of abating. Along with these bombing campaigns, great efforts were made to inform people through propaganda of the true nature of the American caste system, cloaked as it is, in this so-called democracy.

"We were not born to toil as automats..." as one flyer put it, "but to live free, to destroy this world of crime and misery that has been built around us and to rebuild with its freed atoms a new civilization, as yet undreamed of."

All of this thrilled and terrified me. The anarchists impressed me strangely with their fearless, unflinching assessment of the workers' predicament and throughout my time in Plymouth I would see much to bring me around to their point of view.

* * * *

LIVING IN SOUTHWICK ALL MY LIFE, I had been profoundly (if not deliberately) insulated from just this sort of talk and it angered me to think I had been kept in the dark. In Southwick, the turbulence of the times had barely been permitted to touch my life. It was all a dim nightmare occurring somewhere beyond the horizon. During my last year of high school my schoolteachers had spoken in an ominous way of the "German Threat" and this had formed my principle understanding of the matter. The Polite Society to which my mother belonged would barely speak of the war at all and they had all discouraged my inquiries so entirely that I had soon stopped asking questions altogether. But on the streets of Plymouth, Massachusetts I received a condensed education on the war between the classes in America. The headlines of all the major newspapers endlessly stated and restated the rich man's point of view but the growing frustration and disgust of the man in the street provided a jarring counterpoint. Thus, I soon found myself in a boiling cauldron of bitter animosities between those who called themselves Marxians, Wobblies, Nihilists, Egoists, Christians, foreign Nationalists and a few plain old-fashioned crazy people. And there, in the center of this maelstrom, was that small but determined anarchist minority with whom I worked.

For myself, I bit my tongue, though I remained a keen observer of the events happening around me. By and large, I agreed with those people who called themselves anarchists and saw in their uncompromised position a ray of hope unlike anything I had previously encountered in my fellow man. As a small boy I had once had a terrible vision of the world as a gigantic processing machine, a harvester of human souls comprised of smokestacks, schools, churches, and workhouses. I longed to see it all demolished and the people trapped within it set free and yet I was afraid. I had always

been afraid, and so I had never spoken of this vision to anyone. These were my private thoughts and I could think of no good reason to display them publicly. Doing so could only attract unwanted attention from the plain-clothes coppers and the company spies I knew must be lurking nearby. I kept to myself, feigning mere curiosity when confronted, reading and attending lectures with varying degrees of interest and attempting to remain reasonably well-informed.

* * * *

THROUGHOUT THIS TURBULENT PERIOD (and due in large part to my improved physical health) my sociability towards my fellows improved considerably and soon enough, at the factory where I worked, one of the pretty young secretaries developed a crush and began to court me. She was a thoughtful, talkative girl and (perhaps more from a sense of amazed disbelief than anything else) I responded to her in kind and we began to see each other. (I will omit her name, since she showed me great kindness and should in no way be associated with the horrible things I must soon describe.) Before I knew what was happening we were engaged to be married and making all sorts of wild plans. Her wish, and mine too, was to build a cabin in the woods and perhaps raise some children. The city was fast becoming a place to escape from, and many times she came to me and begged me to flee with her into the unknown countryside. She would regale me with breathless descriptions of a life which sounded like heaven; on many happy evenings I would sit smoking at the window sill and listen to her elucidate the details of our happy ever after.

And so at the ripe age of 18, in a city that seemed, at times, poised on the brink of revolution, my life was finally beginning to resemble the kind of life that I could actually be proud of. My fiancée was an open-minded and adventurous woman and those precious seven months I lived with her, symptom-free,

are the one bright spot in a life otherwise darkened with dread, confusion, and horror. My sweetheart was, among other things, a tireless animal lover who, in her spare time, took in stray and wounded animals and nursed them back to health. It occurs to me now that it was in a like manner that she took me in, into her heart and her home. And I, an absolute stranger to this sort of treatment, greedily devoured all the love and compassion that she willingly gave to me.

For a time we were quite happy and had even begun to talk about having a child, when there came that fateful day when, to my profound disappointment, the headaches, the stomach pains, and the nightmares returned (only now with a renewed and bracing intensity). Along with these symptoms, there also came the acute foulness of mood which had heretofore spoiled my prospects for real human intimacy. But even this was not the worst of it, for it was at this time of mounting fear and uncertainty about my future that I made that most incredible and horrendous discovery, a discovery which firmly placed me on the road to madness.

Walking home from work one evening, along the sloping meadows at the edge of town, the sound of an explosion reached my ears. The automobile was an increasingly common sight on the lesser turnpikes of New England, though in these desperate times motorists often avoided back roads for fear of bandits. Running at my top speed in the direction of the sound, I came upon the scene of a terrible motor-crash. An automobile had hopped the embankment and tumbled down a considerable slope, rolling over many, many times before landing, right side up, at the bottom of the ravine. Without hesitation I scrambled down the grassy incline, calling out to whatever survivors might still be conscious. My hopes were dashed however when, upon arriving alongside the crumpled hulk, I saw through the shattered windscreen

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Media Reviews

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Anarcho-Syndicalist Review

#61 (Winter 2014)

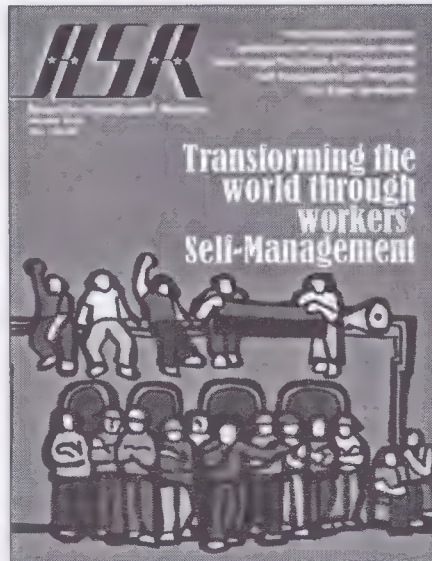
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Review by Squee

BEFORE AN AUDIENCE OF UNION-ized metalworkers, Lucien van der Walt debated with a South African Communist Party member. It is summarized between cheers and laughs from the floor. If you haven't ever witnessed the spectacle of an anarcho-syndicalist putting a Marxist-Leninist to shame before an audience of industrial workers, "Speech to Metalworkers: Anarcho-Syndicalism for South African Unions Today" would be a good piece to form a sense of the occasion. It is also the exact sort of self-congratulatory material that you would expect from an anarchist labor magazine: a few of the anarcho-syndicalist's better arguments, briefly interrupted by the Marxist-Leninist's oldest and most oblivious responses. In this case, the interruptions are quotes from Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?*

These debates tend to feel as slick as any other politician's. The audience is treated to a few versions of flattery and confidence-boosting, the talking-points are polished and entertaining, and there is little to dwell on when it is over. When an anarchist is presented as the debate champion, the contradictions are even more apparent. Here we have van der



Walt arguing for the self-emancipation of the working class through their already co-opted union. In other words, van der Walt is reduced to pleading with metalworkers to do something for themselves. As opposed to what? To continuing their working relationships with political parties, even a Communist one. And how? Well, let him tell you about the CNT and FAI. And what role will LvdW be playing in this transformation? We don't find out.

Challenging the SACP's attempts to suck up labor unions isn't itself a bad thing. The issue with such rabble-rousing and agitation is that despite the weakness of their arguments, the SACP offers some sort of hand in carrying out its proposals. It's a hand worth biting off, but with

what teeth? The advantage for the SACP is that their organization is offering its resources, representation, and strategic leadership; even if the offer isn't to the benefit of the workers. Lucien comes to the debate with some solid argumentation, including examples of organized syndicalists; however, his suggestion that the workers transform their state-friendly union into a syndicalist one asks more from the workers than it gives. It asks them to take on all of the tasks that are performed by the present leadership and/or future SACP leadership, without really offering any help.

The article doesn't mention the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front (ZACF), but offering ZACF membership at the end of the debate for interested "militants" wouldn't surprise me. After all, the ZACF, as a neo-Platformist organization, practices an insertion strategy that tends to look a lot like the actions van der Walt is taking in this debate. It also looks like anarchist motivational speaking and career counseling. I wouldn't mind seeing a follow-up from the metalworkers in response, I just doubt that they will. From my experience, outside agitation tends to annoy people, even when it takes the form of an accusation. When outside agitation is the main strategy, I expect even less positive response.

Wayne Price's contribution in this issue is "Workers' Self-Directed Enterprises: A Revolutionary Program." Anarchist (and socialist) history is filled with advocacy for the self-management and ownership of their workplaces by the workers

themselves. There are many examples to choose from where workers have demonstrated their capacity not only to manage their work, but to increase the average wage and out-compete capitalist enterprises within the same industries. This is not the challenging issue for Price. The larger question is the more difficult one to answer: can a complex economy actually function in this way?

Price presents some of the other factors involved with this question. Should these enterprises compete in markets? To what extent? Can they exist alongside capitalist firms? Can the State be used to create them? To plan their exchanges?

He provides answers that the quoted thinkers had not. The "workers' self-directed enterprise" can play a major role in an anarchist revolution. Not only this, but to truly resolve present-day and past failures of implementing this mode of production, they must be revolutionary: workers must be willing to expropriate from the capitalist class their ill-gotten gains in labor, capital, and productive machinery.

Price takes care to emphasize that this would be only one component of a more elaborate program. He mentions the importance of neighborhood associations and other organizations. Surprisingly for a self-described anarchist, he also advocates for revolutionaries to accept state intervention: public works programs, public funding for cooperatives, instituting a political preference for these modes of production. Price seems quite convinced that this could even resolve some larger crises caused by capitalism.

This aspect of Price's thinking flies in the face of revolutionary anarchism. What makes them any less authoritarian than council tendencies and other such social-democratic mechanisms? Are we to imagine that the State's preference for workers' self-management would somehow put more power into the hands of the State's subjects, simply because

managerial tasks are performed by the working class itself? These suggestions leave workers subordinate to state regulations, market forces, and whatever other institutions are to emerge for their maintenance. They would barely mend the complex divisions of labor that help reproduce economic (and other forms of) inequality.

The fundamental economic oppression is the dispossession that compels people to sell themselves to those who use the State's power to possess the means to life. What is it to me if I am driven to subordinate myself to a cooperative enterprise, instead of an enterprise owned by capitalists and managed by other employees? The capitalists and the managers may be upset with such reforms, but the basic compulsion to work and the basic alienation of people from the means to their own survival would still be in effect. The authoritarians, representatives of this supposed transformation of labor, would have the last laugh.

From a less (or anti-) work-oriented anarchist, there is little to argue with when it comes to such superficial alterations of economic compulsion: it's still work. If the choice is between Price's suggestions and the others he mentions, I'm fine with his brand of social management, but not his claim that it is anarchist. A more interesting issue for me, however, is his emphasis on work; typical of anarcho-syndicalists, he doesn't question its existence or its history. I agree that the bastards ought to be expropriated, but not through state policy, and not in this sense of merely eliminating the division between workers and managers, or workers and owners of infrastructure. I do not look forward to a world of workers, even if that world's dispossession is self-managed cooperatively.

"For Cyber Syndicalism," by Jeff Shantz, is short but sweet. Shantz compares contemporary hacktivism with a history of

The Anarchy Organization (TAO), a group of Canadian-based anarchist techies that focused on the material basis for technological infrastructure. Shantz notes that radical techs today seem to lack a depth of vision for their projects. He notes some of the more popular hacktivist actions: DDOS attacks on websites, online advocacy, facilitating communication between on-the-ground actors. By way of contrast, TAO aimed immediately to change the relationship among people and the way they use computers; they supplied the resources necessary for the web's existence, to be managed collectively, by radicals themselves. While this also included hosting services anarchists were using, TAO saw themselves as part of a broader anarchist mission to create autonomous and self-reliant spaces.

I can see where Shantz would draw the connection between TAO and syndicalism (hence the title), but I think that similar projects today — that in fact exist — would hesitate to express their vision in such worker-centric language. Where small-scale production for mass society no longer made sense, anarcho-syndicalism grew as one response to the exploitation of a mostly factory-working proletariat. The formation and maintenance of servers and other hardware components do not come with this problem (though the production of their materials may); they're not a good example for anything at the scale of the means of production that syndicalists traditionally look to expropriate. They are a better example of a means of production that requires small-scale land, energy, labor, and other such resources or practices. And for those, a discussion of something like a revolution through syndicalist unions has very little applicability.

Nevertheless, examining the early radical web is an important part of coming to grips with contemporary conditions and the many ways that they change anarchist practices, and anarchists' lives. (A)

Published by the Free Association of Anarchists (FAA) — Summer 2015 — Vol. 14

BLACK FLAG

Building an anti-oppression politics that works

—Black Flag Editors

In thinking through the questions tackled in "We shouldn't work with white people..." in this issue, we encountered an even bigger question: How do we create genuinely anti-oppressive movements and spaces that actually confront and help dismantle systemic oppressions—white supremacy, racism, patriarchy, and so on—while at the same time avoiding the "liberalism" often associated with anti-oppression politics.

What do we mean by "liberalism," and how can anti-oppression

politics be "liberal"? Here, "liberalism" means the belief that the current system of capitalist economics and "representative democracy" politics is basically good, and that we simply need to make tweaks and adjustments to this system (mainly new legal reforms and social programs) to make it work fairly and justly for everyone. We contrast "liberal" with "radical," a political orientation that views the status quo as unalterably corrupt, and attempts to change how our society functions fundamentally "at its roots" ("radical" comes from a Latin word

meaning "root")—usually through various forms of revolutionary transformation, whether gradual or in specific momentary upheavals. Obviously, anarchist politics belong to the "radical" category.

To understand how anti-oppression politics can sometimes be liberal (or, at least, counter-radical), we should first understand what we mean by "anti-oppression politics." The piece "Anti-Oppression Politics in Anti-Capitalist Movements" from vol. 1 (2005) of the radical Canadian journal

Can't on pg 2

Letter from the Black Flag editors: "You can't be effective on a burning train" OR "why anarchism isn't enough"

...One evening a cousin of Sasha, a young boy, took me aside. With a grave face, as if he were about to announce the death of a dear comrade, he whispered to me that it did not behoove an agitator to dance. Certainly not with such reckless abandon, anyway. It was undignified for one who was on the way to become a force in the anarchist movement. My frivolity would only hurt the Cause.

I grew furious at the impudent

interference of the boy. I told him to mind his own business. I was tired of having the Cause constantly thrown into my face. I did not believe that a Cause which stood for a beautiful ideal, for anarchism, for release and freedom from conventions and prejudice, should demand the denial of life and joy. I insisted that our Cause could not expect me to become a nun and that the movement should not be turned into a cloister. If it meant that, I did not want it. I want

freedom, the right to self-expression, everybody's right to beautiful, radiant things." Anarchism meant that to me, and I would live it in spite of the whole world — prisons, persecution, everything. Yes, even in spite of the condemnation of my own closest comrades I would live my beautiful ideal. —Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, Chapter 5.

In this issue, several important pieces assess some of the problems currently facing our movement,

Can't on pg 10

Black Flag

FREE ASSOCIATION OF ANARCHISTS (FAA)
Volume 15 Fall 2015



FIGHT WAR
NOT WARS,
DESTROY POWER
NOT PEOPLE.

Letter from the Black Flag Editors:

More Thoughts on Anti-Oppression Politics

1. Invaluable backpacks all the way down.

Imagine a group of elementary school students in which boys consistently outperform girls at tests of math and science skills. You test them again, but this time you send their tests to a group of teachers who must grade them "blindly"—the teachers don't know which tests were taken by boys and which were taken by girls. Suddenly, the gender disparity in test results vanishes.

No surprise there. We know that the institutionalized education system systematically discriminates against women and girls in math and science disciplines.

But one fact does jump out as startling and unexpected: the original group of teachers, the ones who routinely gave the girls unfairly low grades, were themselves mostly women.

A study just like this was performed by Edith Sand and Victor Lavy at Tel Aviv University in Israel; Shanker Vaidyan reported on the study on the Sept 1st episode of NPR's Morning Edition. <http://www.npr.org/2015/09/01/436525758/how-teachers-unconscious-bias-play-into-the-hands-of-gender-disparity>

The study's authors speculate that these teachers were not consciously "self-loathing" or biased against their own group (i.e. women); rather, they were acting out unconscious biases in their grading efforts. This fact isn't really surprising either. Kenneth and Mamie Clark's famous "doll study," for example, was an early inquiry into how over-arching social systems can lead to subconscious bias against one's own group. In fact, the latest annual report by the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, "State of the Science: Implicit Bias Review 2014," cites an impressive body of research demonstrating that "Everyone is

A SPECIAL
ISSUE ON
THE
POLITICS OF
OPPRESSION

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Black Flag

#14 (Summer 2015) and #15 (Fall 2015)

Free Association of Anarchists

theanarchistassociation.wordpress.com

faacollective@riseup.net

Review by Lawrence

THIS FREE EZINE COMING OUT OF Los Angeles, with its emphasis on activism, never really caught my eye. At around the same time as we were going to print with #76, however, a notice came to our email soliciting essays and commentaries about anti-oppression politics, and more specifically, anarchist responses to the problems raised by it. I was curious about possible overlaps with "Against Identity Politics," our central essay in that issue, since virtually all Identity Politicians use the catch-phrase "anti-oppression" to describe their activism. Like all activism, the anarchist variant remains hobbled by superficial

analysis and formulaic strategies harking back to (the failures of) The Sixties, which means Anti-Imperialism abroad and Anti-Racism at home. The logical conclusion? It's the editorial subtitle of #14: "why anarchism isn't enough." My question is: enough for what? The editors identify problems resulting from "focusing on external political change," that "can become a direct impediment to healing and improving the self." But the limitations, challenges, dead-ends, and defeats of activist anarchism emerge from the premise(s) of ameliorating exploitation and injustice; when people sacrifice their happiness or healing for some cause or "movement," and there are no quick or easy victories to point to (let alone to experience first-hand), disappointment and demoralization are inevitable. This is not a problem with anarchism, but with activism; the editors might have benefited from the many critiques of activism that have circulated

in the radical scene (not just from anarchists) for the past half-century. Instead, when the authors aren't lamenting the limitations of anarchism as an activist strategy, they are uncritically advertising their participation in collaborative actions with various Leftist projects and campaigns, even going so far as to reprint the synopsis of Alinsky's "Rules for Radicals" (though they have the good taste to say that they "might not be embraced by all of today's anarchists"). Despite their properly skeptical attitude, their activist/community organizer framework keeps them from engaging in a fuller and more specifically anarchist/anti-authoritarian examination of the difficulties with Anti-Oppression Politics, and, more especially, its practitioners. Some deeper analysis and discussion is definitely in order; regardless, they are tackling a tricky subject, and so far at least, their critical instincts are all in the right places. **A**

Other notable print media:

baeden

baeden.noblogs.org

We can't say enough good things about this project, the very best of queer nihilism (#1), queer heresy (#2), and queer time travel (#3); available through Little Black Cart.

Black Seed #4

PO Box 68271

Grand Rapids MI 49516

A very intelligent critical examination of the intersections of green anarchy, anti-civ thought, indigenous storytelling, and animist spirituality.

EC Publications

PO Box 1014

Jacksonville OR 97530

These folks produce a seemingly endless catalog of nihilist, egoist, and otherwise scandalous pamphlets.

Endnotes #4

Unity in Separation

endnotes.org.uk

\$30/3 issues

Everything you've always ever wanted to know (and some stuff you might not want to know) about autonomous Marxism.

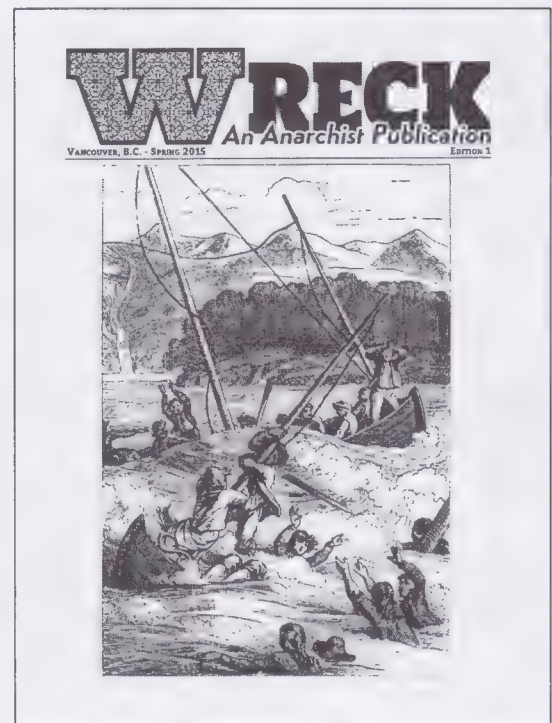
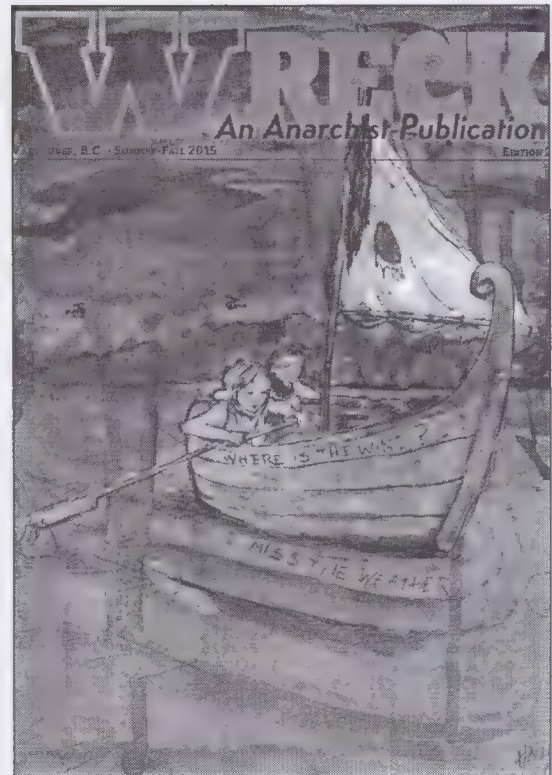
Wreck:

An Anarchist Publication

#1 (Spring 2015) and #2 (Summer-Fall 2015)

wreckpublication.wordpress.com

A new periodical from Vancouver, B.C. — aka unceded Coast Salish territories — focused on radical activism and indigenous struggles.



Periodicals and publishers exchanging with Ajoda (or that are freely available)

AK Press
674-A 23rd St
Oakland CA 94612
and

AK Press UK
PO Box 12766
Edinburgh EH8 9YE
Scotland

After a devastating fire and a tragic loss of life at their warehouse last year, almost all AK operations will be relocating to the suburban wilds of Mendocino County. I recently trudged through a 2011 book, *Eyes to the South: French Anarchists & Algeria* by David Porter. At 582 pages, it was quite a chore; the most interesting parts were Porter's examination of the various rivalries that existed in the 1950s and have carried through to the present among French anarchists and their various groups (both formal and informal). Conflicts relating to nationalism (what activists today might refer to as Anti-Oppression work) and collaboration with Marxists (and even with state-aligned formations) figure prominently as the basic reasons for the short-term and long-term splits and conflicts among different anarchist tendencies, and Porter does his best to explain them in as much detail as required for readers to get an idea of the personalities and issues involved. In some ways it was gratifying to read that the problems and challenges are similar to the more familiar contemporary conflicts between anarchists everywhere; in some ways it's sad to read that inter-anarchist relations and tendencies seem not to have progressed at all...

Alternative Press Center
PO Box 47739
Chicago IL 60647

Publishers of the *Alternative Press Index*.

Anchorage Anarchy
Bad Press
PO Box 230332
Anchorage AK 99523

"A semi-annual publication of Bad Press, an anti-government anarchist project."

Anarchist Studies
c/o Dr Ruth Kinna
Dept of European Studies,
Loughborough University
Loughborough LE11 3TU
England

The go-to place for the best academic anarchism has to offer; this time around focusing on (Sir) Herbert Read.

AREDHIS
BP 20306
60203 Compiègne Cedex
France

Publishers of *Troploin* newsletter (in English).

Archivio Famiglia Berneri
Flamma Chessa, Via Travolata, 6
42100 Reggio Emilia
Italy

Autonomea
PO Box 568 Williamsburgh Stn
Brooklyn NY 11211

Publisher of usually excellent radical analysis.

Bulletino Archivio G. Pinelli
via Roverto 27
20127 Milano
Italy

Italian-language bulletin focusing on anarchist history; also a public archive.

Bureau of Public Secrets
PO Box 1044
Berkeley CA 94701

Home of the most extensive Debordist Situationist archive in English.

Bulletin du CIRA
Avenue de Beaumont 24
CH-1012 Lausanne
Switzerland

Publishers of the French-language journal of the International Center for Research on Anarchism.

CNT
Pza. Tirso de Molina
28012 Madrid
Spain

Spanish-language newspaper of the anarcho-sindicalist CNT.

Collectif Hors d'Ordre
64, rue de Maisonneuve, app.4
Quebec PQ G1R 2C3
Canada

Eastwest; an anarchist newspaper
eastwest@riseup.net

An 8-12 page semi-monthly paper geared to the activist crowd, but also containing tidbits of local history.

Ekintza Zuzena
Apdo 235, Postakutxa
48080 Bilbo Bizkaia
Spain

Spanish- and Euzkara-language quarterly journal of culture and anarchism.

La Fabrique
64 rue Rébeval
75019 Paris
France

Publishers of the French-language works of Tiqqun and the Invisible Committee.

Fifth Estate
PO Box 201016
Ferndale MI 48220

Hard to believe that *FE* turned 50 in 2015.

Industrial Worker
PO Box 180195
Chicago IL 60618

Newspaper of the Industrial Workers of the World.

Kate Sharpley Library
2425 Channing Way, PMB 820
Berkeley CA 94704

Invaluable publishers of neglected and/or forgotten moments and personalities in international anarchism.

Little Black Cart
PO Box 3920
Berkeley Ca 94703
littleblackcart.com

Publishers and distributors of anarchist and anti-political books, journals, and ephemera. Good stuff this year includes "Everything Must Go," a new English-language exposition of communism by Bruno Astarian and Gilles Dauvé; the self-explanatory "Tiqqun and the Matter of Bloom in Contemporary Political Philosophy"; and "Worker's Book of 50 Sectarian Crosswords." Also important are the reprint of the classic 1972 prank "Manual for Revolutionary Leaders" by Michael Velli (Machiavelli, get it?), a text that hoodwinked plenty of Anti-Imperialist Leftists when it was first printed; it purports to be a singular tome but is actually a skillful mash-up of (mostly) quotations from Mao, Stalin, Ho, Hitler, Mussolini, and various leaders of SDS. The near-seamless jumps from Left to Right showcase the lack of substantial philosophical differences between those who hold or aspire to gain state control.

Rojo y Negro
C/Sagunto, 15
28010 Madrid
Spain

Monthly Spanish-language newspaper of the other anarcho-syndicalists, the CGT.

Rote Hilfe
Postfach 6444
Kiel 24125
Germany

A journal chronicling the legal troubles of Leftist (including some anarchist) defendants and prisoners.

Slingshot
c/o Long Haul
3124 Shattuck Ave
Berkeley CA 94705

Quarterly publication of the (in)famous *Slingshot Organizer*.

Small Press Review
PO Box 100
Paradise CA 95969

Solidaridad Obrera
c/ Joaquin Costa, 34, entlo.
08001 Barcelona
Spain

Another newspaper of the CNT.

Solidaridad Obrera
Ap de Correos no 302
08910 Badalona
Spain

Yet another newspaper of the CNT.

South Chicago Anarchist Black Cross
P.O. Box 721
Homewood, IL 60430

Publishers of pamphlets and flyers in support of various prisoners, including some anarchists.

The Student Insurgent
1228 Univ of Oregon
Eugene OR 97403

The usual annoying students-playing-at-anarchism.

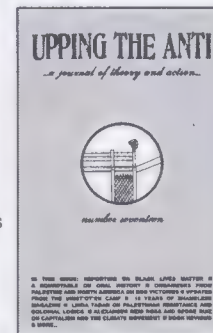
Turning the Tide
PO Box 1055
Culver City CA 90232

Newspaper of the former Los Angeles chapter of Anti-Racist Action, now the Inter-Communal Solidarity Committee.

Upping the Anti:
A Journal of Theory and Action
998 Bloor St W PO Box 10571
Toronto ON M6H 4H9
Canada

A journal that tries to bridge the gap between grad students and street activists, tending quite unfortunately toward an ahistorically enthusiastic Popular Frontism. It's especially tough not to be baffled by a few comments in the introduction of #17.

They say they are "very grateful to [the artist] for providing us with Issue 17's amazing cover art," a naive-style drawing of a corrections van facing through the security gate of a jail topped with barbed wire. The aesthetic standards of the continually revamped editorial board must be severely limited if they can describe this graphic as "amazing." Further on they announce that "UTA strives to cover topics that pique our readers' interests and to continue to inspire debate about the systems that structure our world and the ways we resist them. We strive to publish your letters on the previous issues' contents in order to continue generating discussions..." While there have been such letters in every previous issue, #17 is curiously bereft of any. It strange to be so self-congratulatory when there's a conspicuous absence of what they've been so proud of.



Apparently discontinued projects:

Any Time Now
Affinity Place
Argenta BC V0G 1B0
Canada

Prisoners' Dilemma
PO Box 95006
Seattle WA 98145

Raging Pelican
828 Royal St #281
New Orleans LA 70116



CHRISTIAN EDLER

Embarrassments to the Milieu

1st Annual Anarchism, Crime, and Justice Conference at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, USA

Theme:

Prison Abolition, Transformative Justice, and Fighting Repression

March 26 and 27, 2016

Description:

Activists and scholars working within the realm of challenging the current punitive criminal justice system are welcome to submit for the 1st Annual Anarchism, Crime, and Justice Conference, an anarchist criminology conference. This conference is structured around challenging and abolishing punitive justice, while promoting community-based alternatives such as restorative justice, transformative justice and Hip Hop battling. This conference welcomes all those interested in providing performances, workshops, lecturers, teach-ins, roundtables, and film screenings. Topics of interest include prison abolition, prisoner support, critiques of political repression, police abolition, de-colonialism, abolition of zero tolerance policies and the school to prison pipeline, all forms of academic repression, corporate repression, state terrorism, all things pertaining to youth justice, total liberation, intersectionality, horizontalism, LGBTTTQQA, mutual aid, disability liberation, Black liberation, indigenous sovereignty, racial justice, animal liberation, environmental justice, green anarchism, anarchism, and justice. This conference also welcomes all forms of art and music for social justice such as Hip Hop activism.

Conference Schedule:

<http://savethekidsgroup.org/1st-annual-anarchism-crime-and-justice-conference-at-fort-lewis-college-in-durango-colorado-usa/>

For more information contact:

Anthony Nocella nocellat@yahoo.com or 315-657-2911

[Thanks to Bob Black for the tip.]

Dishonorable Mentions: { <http://www.anarkismo.net/article/28974>
<http://strikemag.org/manarchist/>

Theological Residues

from page 41

misanthropic, or anti-social desires will be branded with the neo-fascist label, and heaped upon their fire. And when that label is itself so loose as to be applied to any scent of death, allowance of difference, or searching for place, you should expect the possibility that the label will be leveled and a campaign begun against you. This is even more true if the negativity isn't exclusively aimed at the bad guys. If you have read, taken interest in, or found worthy ideas from Junger, Spengler, Heidegger, Land, Individualists Tending Toward the Wild, Wild Reaction, other anti-humanist, anti-rationalist, or any variety of blacklisted authors or tendencies, you may very well be a neo-fascist *and not even know it*. The ability to understand tension or subtlety between ideas or to separate ideas from the personalities who write them is lost on the action-oriented antifa militant.

UA draws a multitude of stories together, and through the unity of so many specters, attempts to create an enemy they can fight: the easy enemy who anarchists finally might be capable of defeating, an enemy perhaps offering the sense and satisfaction of being a corollary to 1936 Spain — even though we couldn't live in a more different world. When

targeting the US prison system appears impossible, locating, mobilizing troops, and attacking a fringe and powerless enemy is achievable, offering immediate direction and meaning. This mythology winds up playing itself out with a comic Sisyphean consequence. Even those who militantly fight white nationalism and neo-fascism unknowingly construct for themselves the very same dualistic mythological framework of their enemy. With this, we come full-circle to Perlman's unreferenced analysis of becoming what we fight. UA's writers and fans are blind to how they are simply the foot soldiers for the flip side of the neo-fascists. They fail to grasp that *both* sides are lost and searching for meaning. And it is here that we finally find the true motivation for the meta-narrative in UA: to answer Occupy's unfulfilled question, to re-mobilize "the militants of 2011" and to be the successful heirs to the plane of universal meaning. As is always the case, universal meaning leads to violent war over the Truth claim: annihilation or total submission of those who disagree with you.

The narrative of UA proposes finding meaning through militancy, anti-racism, and the pre-figuration of an egalitarian world. While the authors seem to believe

that all of these good ideas put into practice will lead to a veritable paradise; what they can't acknowledge is that the weakness — and beauty — of anarchy lies within its inability to control disparate ideas and groups of people. UA's meta-narrative focuses on redemption and salvation instead of dispersal, unraveling, and fizzling out. There will always be bad things in the world, and by *bad* I mean others who choose to live with different values from ours, sometimes values or practices that shock us in horror. Society, war, and states begin when these different ways-of-being force their Truth and Rightness onto others. (A)

"Banishment as an attribute of society is a symptom of its imperfection; the anarch accommodates himself to it while the anarchist tries to eliminate it. These are theological residues. Only in a perfect condition "shall there be no more anathema" (Revelation 22:3). "But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him." Those are dismal prospects. Even anarchism ultimately leads to someone whose feet must be kissed."

~ Ernst Jünger, *Eumeswil*, 1977~

Homuncula

from page 61

the sole occupant of the vehicle whose tremendous injuries left no chance for survival. The interior of the vehicle was covered with blood and the driver, a young woman no more than 25 years of age, was draped over the steering wheel, the many impacts and subsequent explosion having placed her beyond all possible human aid. The angle of her neck indicated in no uncertain terms that it was broken and her head, shattered across its backmost portion, was broken open from scalp to neck leaving the protuberant brain profoundly exposed.

Dumbstruck, I turned to leave with a plan to fetch help at one of the country

houses I had spied earlier along the turnpike, but, having gone just a few steps, I found my feet strangely rooted to the spot. A feeling of elation swept over me and, for a moment, my body swayed drunkenly in the still air. Then, with a lump in my throat, and without conscious effort on my part, I moved back toward the wreck again, with something like a dimly formed plan to inspect the mangled form of the woman more closely.

It was then that a sensation I can scarcely describe overwhelmed me. My stomach began to heave and to twist inside of me with such violence that I collapsed in the grass, where I

lay doubled up and in terrible pain for several minutes. I recall a tremendous feeling of terror descending upon me and then, as I lay there helplessly immobile, I became senseless. The grass around me seemed to come alive with hissing and swishing sounds and ugly shapes and shadows danced at the edges of my vision. The spasms in my gut were now profoundly painful, being noticeably worse than ever before. Within minutes the convulsions had settled into a rhythmic cramping and I realized that the inexplicable hunger had returned, bringing with it a keen awareness of the object of my desire. (A)

Letters



The Search for a Worthy Opponent Continues...

EDITORS: IN #75, I COMPLAINED THAT "it's getting harder for me to find people to pick on who are older than I am." In #76, a volunteer steps forward! Peter Werbe, who for opportunism is second to none, not even Murray Bookchin or Chris Day.

Who is Peter Werbe? The most seasoned *apparatchik* on the anarchist scene. He has been with the *Fifth Estate* since its founding, in 1965, as a counter-cultural "underground newspaper" – the first or second such paper. In the late 1960s it was, like SDS, taken over by Maoists. But Werbe hung in there! In 1975, Werbe led an anarchist coup. It was then that the *Fifth Estate* became interesting, and important, to many people, including myself. That

was largely because of the influence of Fredy Perlman, who died, to our loss, in 1985.

The newspaper lost its nerve. The core participants were now married homeowners approaching middle age. There were no more capers like the *Eat the Rich* cookbook (Lenin Harangue Pie, Popepourri, Hearst Patties, etc.), or the poster blitz: "Easter Cancelled – Christ's Body Found." Some readers, myself included, perceived a decline in intellectual rigor and relevance, not to mention the decline of its sense of humor – and we said so. The *Fifth Estate* elders turned this into a joke, as their project drifted on into the 90's, and longer. People have been saying that for many years, they said. The reason people said that for many years is that the decline continued for many years. I never said that it couldn't get any worse. It did.

The *Fifth Estate* also assumed an aloof stance toward other anarchists. Their struggles were of no interest to the Olympians of Detroit's Cass Corridor (since relocated to suburbia). Earlier, the paper exposed the opportunism and financial chicanery of Black Rose Books in Montreal, as had Fredy Perlman. But when my conflict with *Processed World* got serious, Werbe agreed with me when I wrote to him, if you don't expose this (by publishing "Circle-A Deceit," for instance), who will? Werbe agreed. And he covered up the scandal as it developed, and ever since.

The elders were getting too old, and too tired, and maybe too bored. Enter Andy Smith ("Sunfrog") who moved the production to Tennessee, and, despite Werbe's denials, dumbed down the content of the newspaper and returned it, unfortunately, to its hippie roots, although those roots had long since rotted. This was when the paper dropped the word "anarchist" from its masthead, as it could no longer pretend to be an anarchist newspaper. Smith is out, which made some improvements easy. But the patriarchs have long since lost their stuff, and the newspaper isn't open to post-left anarchists or anybody with anything new or interesting to say.

Werbe always lands on his feet. In 1830, the new French King, Louis Philippe, told Talleyrand, "you have served many masters." "Sire," he replied, "you are the thirtieth." Werbe has served many masters, and mastered many servants. He has little choice but to defend the Sunfrog regime, which he authorized, and which is two-thirds of the anarchist history of the *Fifth Estate*. There has been no regime change since 1965 which did not have his personal approval.

Now I turn to Werbe's gratuitous slurs against me. He opened a rejoinder to Rand Gould in this way: "Like Bob Black's essay in the same issue as my

letter, Gould's response is unscientific and anti-philosophical – when it isn't simply sophomoric – and essentially deserves no reply, but ... " – he provides one anyway, to Gould but not to me. Werbe thinks he makes "scientific," "philosophical," and/or "logical points." His "points" might be true (usually not), but they are not scientific, philosophical or logical. Werbe betrays his anxiety to identify with Western science, philosophy and logic – which all received some critique in the *Fifth Estate's* better days. Confirming my intuition that the failure of the *Fifth Estate* is a failure of nerve. As an aside: Werbe misspells "sty."

Werbe continues: "Black and Gould made rhetorical points and supported them with sententious flourish; and never the twain shall meet." Werbe must not know what some of these big words mean. I am unable to imagine a statement both "sententious" and with "flourish." Werbe's sentences are always sententious and they always lack flourish. That has been true of his writing for at least 30 years (and I doubt there was much flourish in his Maoist phase). As for "never the twain shall meet" – what a refreshingly original expression! – he is of course wrong. Rhetorical points and flourish go well together. Every orator knows this.

Preposterously, Werbe continues by claiming to have supported his "points" by "empirical evidence and reasonable extrapolation." Self-serving testimony is admissible in evidence, but the jury doesn't have to believe it. His only authority for what he says is himself. I noticed no "extrapolation" in either of his letters. My essay in #75, he implies, lacks empirical evidence and reasonable extrapolation. It contains 30 footnotes, citing 20 sources (in addition to myself) including a Jean Baudrillard book which the *Fifth Estate* once excerpted. What does he want, an egg in his beer?



Here is a dialectical wriggle worthy of a former admirer of Mao Zedong's On Contradiction. Contradicting Rand Gould, he claims: "I never claimed that anarchy is a science; I merely referred to a 'science of anarchy' – that is, for the sake of slow thinkers, the scientific study of the concept 'anarchy.' Is 'political science' a misnomer because 'politics is not a science,'" etc. Political science is a misnomer, but something with that name is one of the university departments. That's an accident of institutional history. There is no department of "anarchist science" anywhere. Very few political science departments, or any departments, offer courses on anarchy. I prefer slow thinkers to intellectual weasels. Gould is right. Werbe is wrong. And we know how highly Werbe values science, because he claims its authority for his "points."

More interesting – to me, anyway – is that Werbe is doing exactly what all my enemies do: they announce that, self-evidently, I am not worth refuting. Murray Bookchin said exactly the same thing in "Whither Anarchism? A Reply to Anarchist Critics." Bookchin said that I misrepresented his curriculum vita (I didn't), and dismissed me, therefore, as not worthy of his august refutations. Then he went on to try to refute all his other anarchist critics – the easier ones (to no avail: see my Nightmares of Reason, [www.theanarchylibrary.org & academia.edu](http://www.theanarchylibrary.org&academia.edu)) – including Werbe's comrade David Watson. Bookchin, schmuck that he was, knew better than to engage in controversy with me. Werbe, schmuck that he is, should have emulated Bookchin's prudence.

In prison, where Rand Gould languishes (and I am sorry about that), the available reading material is limited. To bring him up to date, the "primitive affluence" thesis – that hunter-gatherers usually have plenty to eat, and work less than do people in more complex societies – has been generally accepted by anthropologists for almost 50 years. In my collection *Instead of Work*, I provide many citations. Gould might as well deny evolution or global warming. His contrary evidence? He's lived in the Michigan woods, "an optimal survival environment" (!) – and it's not easy! Even if you have cable! For him, maybe it's not easy, but well-documented hunter-gatherer societies, past and present, did not consist of loners like Rand Gould, the Unabomber (subsidized by his snitch brother), or Robinson Crusoe (who eventually

recruited a work force). They were viable, small-scale anarchist communist societies. Many people pitched in, and everybody shared. Let it go, Rand.

Bob Black
abobob51@verizon.net



Too Many Naughty Bits

From: US Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Prisons
United States Penitentiary, Marion IL
To: Cal Press
Re: Anarchy (No. 76)
Inmate: BOND, Walter, 37096-013

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

The above-referenced publication which you recently mailed has been determined unacceptable for issuance. This publication is being returned in accordance with the Bureau of Prisons Appropriations Act, formerly known as the Ensign Amendment, which states:

None of the funds made available in this act to the Federal Bureau of Prisons may be used to distribute or make available any commercially published information or material to a prisoner when it is made known to the Federal official having authority to obligate or expend such funds that such information or material is sexually explicit or features nudity.

The enclosed publication contains sexually explicit information or material or features nudity and is being returned to you as explained above. You may appeal this decision within 20 days of receipt of this notification by writing to:

U.S. Bureau of Prisons
North Central Regional Office
400 State Street
Tower II, 8th Floor
Kansas City, KS 66101

By copy of this letter, the inmate is advised he may appeal this decision through the Administrative Remedy process.

Sincerely,

(signed) J. S. Walton
Warden

[re: Making Anarchy Palatable (editorial in #75)]

WELL WRITTEN BUT COMPLAINING about anti-anarchist pacification by the left and progressives is about as boring as their initial complaints...

blahbblackship@gmail.com

Professors Are People Too!

I APPRECIATE THAT LAWRENCE SPOT- ted the clear provocation involved in *Black Seed* publishing my 2003 essay, "Anarchy and Anthropology". I had discussed from the outset of that project the possibility of having an open and published discussion with Aragorn! about anthropology potentially even in BS (real acronym). That was lost fairly quickly.

It is strange to respond to a review of a magazine that has both published an older essay of mine (originally written to follow up the interview that precedes it with Theresa Kintz in *Species Traitor* no 3 [2003]) without notification and the editors hadn't bothered to send me a copy. I have yet to see it and have only heard of Aragorn's follow up, so no point in commenting on that.

However, being familiar with my own thoughts and writings, I can respond to Lawrence's disingenuous treatment of said essay. Caveat here: I have no idea if the essay was published in full or if there's an implication to removed statements, in which case the problem here is on BS and not Lawrence, but I don't believe that's the case.

Like Lawrence, I have a degree in cultural anthropology. But considering that my essay in question is directly about the use and abuse of anthropology (a nod towards Sahlins), to pretend that I conflate the existence of "radical anthropologists" with a sentiment that all anthropology is radical is disingenuous at best, but really just paternalistic. Below is one quote, but the sentiment is repeated throughout:

"What is being uncovered by anthropology is too valuable to be discarded, and it is inspiring to see

people from within these fields realizing the potential influence of their work. However, it is equally important to use that evidence as not just 'findings' and 'evidence'. To move beyond civilization we will need to use this kind of knowledge to reawaken the wildness that sleeps within us. Anthropology will remain vital only so long as it speaks to us and we are able to use it without becoming it."

I'm accused of "mythological thinking" for a proposed belief that "radical anthropology" itself can exist. But the "radical anthropologists" cited include anarchists Theresa Kintz and Pierre Clastres, as well as devout Marxists Marshall Sahlins, Richard B. Lee, and Stanley Diamond. That I refer to individuals and not a field is no mere coincidence. I choose my words intently. It's worth noting that an early 2000s attempt at a "Radical Anthropology" anarchist group fell apart because I dismissed the notion out of hand that being anarchists meant that there was an innate connection between an anarcho-primitivist and a syndicalist. That proved true immediately when David Graeber had a hilarious meltdown after I deflated his wretched little *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* and the group fell apart.

If Lawrence wants to pretend that I'm the first person to recognize that anthropology holds a radical history, it's worth remembering that Brian Morris wrote that anarchist history in the pages of *AJODA*, only to be blatantly plagiarized by Graeber in *FoaAA*.

Let's get to the point here. The review in question touches on an endemic fear amongst anarchists of "academia". As noted, both LJ and myself have anthropology degrees. We have, to use the available dogma, "been through the system". If that taint is considered a different beast than my extensive and nuanced use of cultural anthropology, then it's because we have a bone to pick: the merit of any work relevant to anarchism is derived from who signs the author's paycheck.

This begs the question: whom are we trying to fool? Do Professors tow the line to get tenure? Clearly this happens. Do authors tow the line to get a publishing contract? Clearly this happens as well. Anything that isn't self-published may have some of this stench, academic or not? So where do we draw the line? Biases can come from anything and everything. If bias

is grounds for dismissal, then we must abolish the references from academia (say goodnight to your precious Stirner as well). That would be entirely in line with a radical subjectivist drive to rule out anything that isn't innately empirical. But where does that get us? What ground do we lose in the process?

Lest we forget, LJ is a practically a Spanish Civil War Re-enactor. Barring some extraordinary circumstances, we know he wasn't there. Is his obsession anything less than academic? Is the taint of the dreaded University different from the taint of anarchist publishing? To follow the logic at play here, should I innately trust the words of LJ more than I would fellow anarcho-primitivists who are also active anthropologists partaking in their own brushes against their employers because of who pays their rent?

Given that my words apparently need constant and continual restating to be comprehended, let me put it bluntly: This kind of anti-academic knee-jerk reaction bespeaks our own sense of purity. Everyone, *every single source*, should be expected to hold bias. If we can't appreciate that fact then our dialogue is worthless. Infante really. Aragorn's attempts to regurgitate my words and sentiment are wrapped up in an elementary perception of anthropology whereby it is a reified concept that you either accept in full or reject. That is a ridiculous sentiment. Where does that "critique" land you? What use could anything hold?

In this case, anthropology makes a strange target. Interpretation of data is an implicit aspect of the field, but the nature of ethnography is rigorous cataloguing of data. That is why a socio-biologist can cite a cultural materialist's ethnography and vice versa. The systemic dissection of people's lives is unquestionably a civilized process, but that doesn't change the fact that while biases can become evident, the source material is right there and itself open to interpretation. In an ideal world, we wouldn't have to reference any of this, but we're far from that aren't we?

I find the need to reiterate this concept using my own words from 12 years ago to be an indication that the attempts to discredit anthropology en masse (far more by A! and BS than LJ) are a lazy attempt to avoid delving into the material and its implications rather than well-intentioned and worthy engagement. If you want to act as though radical subjectivism is the only platform for discussion, then just

say it. Then the rest of us can nod our heads and walk the other way.

I'll close by quoting the essay in question once again:

"From my own understanding, a mythic, unwritten view is one that is able to flow with the world and can achieve what we'd hope to get from history and science without subjective implications on the world that we are theorizing about. The problem that is being opened here is getting to there from here."

For wildness and anarchy,

Kevin Tucker

Critiquing His Critic with a Critical Critique

DEAR ANARCHY,

I want to thank you for taking up my two books, *Spectacular Capitalism* (2011) and *Precarious Communism* (2014) for criticism and review in *AJODA*, #76. I would only like to note certain corrections to some peculiar errors in Matt Lucas's review article from that issue, "Judging Books by their Covers."

Lucas claims that both books "are long détournements" and that *Spectacular Capitalism* is a détournement of Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.

Spectacular Capitalism is not a long détournement of anything, and nowhere do I claim to offer a "reshaping of the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*." *Spectacular Capitalism* does contain one short détournement as its final chapter, but that is of Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*. The preceding three chapters, which comprise 112 of the book's 133 pages, are in no way intended to be a rethinking of Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.

This may shed some light on Lucas's supposedly critical observation that "The Gotha critique is barely recognizable in *Spectacular Capitalism*." This is of course to be expected since there is not a single passage in that book that indicates any interest in providing sustained engagement with Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.

Precarious Communism, on the other hand, is indeed a book-length détournement of *The Communist Manifesto* of 1848, so the characterization is accurate there. However, Lucas says that "*Precarious Communism* only shows its manifesto roots in a rewriting of the first and last line." This statement is a dead giveaway that Lucas is only

familiar with (as are so many people) the famous first and last lines of *The Communist Manifesto*. But, just because those may be the only two lines in Marx's *Manifesto* that Lucas recalls does not negate the fact that *Precarious Communism* does indeed follow and detourn the form and content of the whole manifesto, with the exception of Part III, Excurses. For Part III, I broke with the method of détournement because I saw no reason to detourn Marx's critical review of socialist literature from over 160 years ago.

These are fairly minor errors, but given the fact that they are such basic mistakes, I had to wonder if Lucas perhaps read the books fast and lightly, and then wrote the review six months later, having left the actual books at a friend's house. They indicate a vague memory of the books and an even vaguer remembrance of his reading of *The Communist Manifesto* from perhaps six years earlier. Who knows?

I cannot gainsay Lucas's sustained repulsion at the book covers. Lucas's claim that they are so hideous and ugly had me convinced! I even found myself laughing at his apt description of one of the book covers as a "diseased candy cane." I can totally see that. So I have nothing to correct there, aside from what he already ob-



serves about his "unfairly harping on" this. Even the title of his review article, "Judging Books by their Covers," announces this particular superficiality from the start.

But to correct Lucas's assumption that this was the bad taste of some in-house Autonomedia graphic designer, the cover painting on *Spectacular Capitalism* was done by the freejazz saxophonist and poet John Gruntfest. And, the cover of *Precarious Communism* was designed by New Collectivism/IRWIN of Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK) in Slovenia. The cover of *Precarious Communism* is a detourned cover

image of the International Publisher's edition of *The Communist Manifesto*.

That doesn't mean that they're not repulsive to look at. But mainly, I hope that the contents of my books would be repulsive to any and all statists and capitalists, and that those who want to abolish the existing state of things might find some beauty in between their covers.

Thanks for an excellent issue and magazine, which are by the way, very nice to look at!

Richard Gilman-Opalsky

Screws Harass Sean's Loved Ones

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT Court for the Northern District of Ohio, Eastern Division Case No 4:14-CV-002074 Sean Swain, Plaintiff vs.

Gary C. Mohr, et al., Defendants Sworn Declaration of Plaintiff Sean Swain

Comes Now Sean Swain, being duly sworn, and deposes and states:

1. I am the Plaintiff in the above-captioned case. I am competent to testify to the facts related herein, to with I have direct knowledge.

2. Defendant prison officials suspended all of my communications mediums for the fourth time in a little over a year with no explanation, no notice, and no recourse to process as dictated by the Ohio Administrative Code. I use this declaration to communicate my situation to the court, to counsel, and to others, as I have no other means to communicate to the outside world.

3. ODRC Counsel Trevor Clark is orchestrating what amounts to an all-out extermination campaign, keeping my body alive inside a cage while obliterating every trace of me from the lives of my loved ones. He has silenced me completely and indefinitely, inflicting intolerable emotional and psychological pain on myself and on those who love me. His state terror campaign has worked. Everyone I love has been harmed irreparably.

4. My dad, who is 69 years old, was admitted to the hospital after back surgery, throwing up blood. He nearly died. During the entire ordeal, he did not hear from me, feeling abandoned by his only child, because Trevor Clark suspended my communications. His recovery has been slow, in do doubt due to my continued, total absence from his life.

5. My mom, who is 70 years old, fell while attempting to care for my dad. She broke several ribs and injured her wrist. She has not heard from me in months and has been on the phone with others, sobbing. Trevor Clark's state terror campaign has driven my parents to emotional and psychological breaking points.

6. This has taken a toll on Denise Miller ("Ihsan"). Trevor Clark purged her from my visiting list and instigated her investigation by the FBI. I previously phoned her daily and she indicated I am her principle source of encouragement. During this state terror, she has lost the progress from her physical therapy and has spent weeks in bed. She has resorted to cutting herself. This is the state to which Trevor Clark's state terror campaign has driven her.

7. Trevor Clark purged Ben Turk from visitation lists and had him investigated by the FBI. The stress and anxiety has psychologically and emotionally worn him down. He is prevented from visiting Bomani Shakur, who faces the end of his appeals and the setting of an execution date.

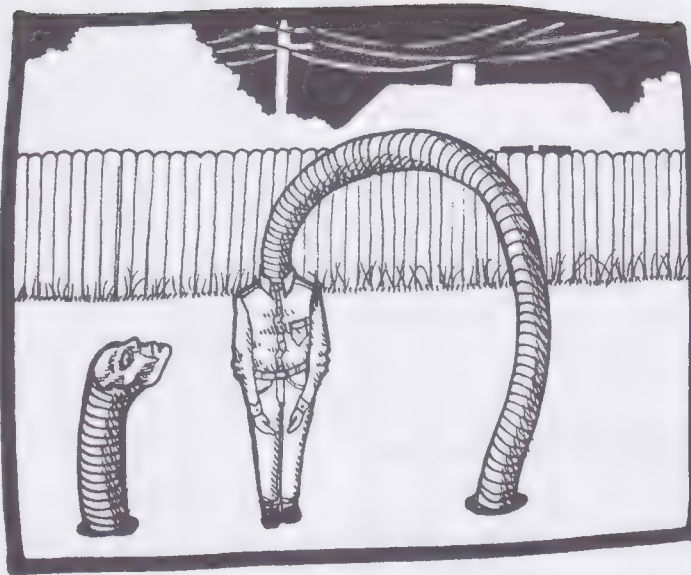
8. The harm I have suffered is irreparable also. All of the projects that gave my life purpose and meaning have been suspended, including publication of a children's book I wrote and my campaign for president. I am helpless, silenced, watching those I love terrorized by Trevor Clark.

9. My counsel has not challenged this. The court has not protected me.

10. In the face of this endless assault on their lives, those who love me have asked me to write a statement denouncing blastblog, in the hopes that such a statement would prompt removal of blastblog online, and that Trevor Clark would then end his state terror campaign. In desperation, those who love me hope denunciation of blastblog will get Trevor Clark to end the assault on our lives.

11. I disagree with their assessment. I believe that if he is rewarded for inhumanity, Trevor Clark will ratchet up his repression until he coerces me to end participation in The Final Straw radio show, then pull the plug on seanswain.org, then cease all personal correspondence. In short, I believe that any ground ceded to Trevor Clark will empower him to utterly drive me out of existence. I believe blastblog is irrelevant to that.

12. I feel I must defer to my loved ones and do as they have requested, denouncing blastblog, though it is my



own personal inclination to articulate an entirely different statement. If I were to follow my own inclinations, which I am not, I would issue a statement that, under duress and out of necessity, with no other means to defend the lives and well-being of loved ones and my own life and liberty, people of conscience and courage should consider recourse to cans of gasoline and books of matches. If following my own inclination, I would suggest that those who wish to preserve my life should begin burning the cares of prison officials responsible for the illegal repression I face, in hopes that torching their homes would not be necessary; and if torching their homes became necessary, that hopefully physical assault on prison officials would not; that if physical assaults became necessary, that hopefully their deaths would not; that if their deaths became necessary, hopefully their replacements would have more sense than they had. But, I have been advised that such a statement would alienate the court reading this action and would irresponsibly encourage free-world people to take extreme risks, so I am not making such a statement.

13. With that caveat, I must defer to those I love and urge that blastblog be removed from the internet, and I now do so. I make this statement out of love and concern for friends and family who have been terrorized by ODRC Counsel Trevor Clark, whose home address has been posted on blastblog. noblogs.org. I make this statement in full anticipation that, in the absence of blastblog, prison officials will soon obliterate my existence permanently.

14. I have directed a DNR for placement in my medical file and I have

signed a declaration setting forth burial instructions in the event of my death. I have not been, nor am I now, suicidal. If, however, I am left no other option but to live the remainder of my life under a regimen of state terror with no communication with those I love, I will make prison officials kill me.

15. In victory, my enemies will only get my corpse.

I sign this declaration pursuant to 28 U.S.C. Paragraph 1746 (signed)

Sean Swain, Plaintiff
Anarchist Prisoner

Warren Correctional Institution
P. O. Box 120

Lebanon, OH 45036

Date: 11 October 2015

b"OB" on OGB

SOME U.S. MODERNISH ANARCHIST History, Mostly the *Love and Rage* Paper and Federation, Much 1st Person Insider Stuff, With Focus On Its' Wrecker Fuckin Chris Gunderson/Day (ugh)

Prelude- I'm against personal attack unless historically needed and in Chris Gunderson/Day's (Day) case it's needed as he was CENTRAL to the whole Love and Rage (l&r) from day 1 affair. I'm really sorry and mean it to the readers- but as I say it's needed.

And for those who say "Oh, this is just over 20 year old crap who cares" or "It's just infighting" our history is important- and relative to this article especially Neither East Nor West-NYC (today we're having something of a semi-rebirth) who sprung up chapters around N. America and were basically

THE thing during part of the 80's (for our history write me, who didn't engage in anarchist (@)infighting except when l&r sneakily, undemocratically, awfully yanked our page in l&r and things blew sky high from all over the world- see article) and our On Gogol Boulevard (OGB) page that had been a mag (in an anarchist (@) mag in Poland so popular it was on Polish newsstands we/me were called a "legend") and it's not just my opinion - it's generally widely shared by the many involved. I contacted Day but he doesn't want to say anything in his defense and Alex Iawasa was shown this and his suggestion was edited in. (Alex is who I was responding to in this article [and then the article took on a life of its' own] as he had some incorrect info in Slingshot @ paper. Slingshot chose to not run this so I'm giving it to Anarchy who asked awhile ago for something like this on Day/l&r too. Alex corrected himself in the Autumn 2015 Slingshot-we're pals and fine).

First a small correction. Alex was just a bit wrong in his zine review of *l&r*, p.19 in *Slingshot Anarchist Study Poop 2015*, when he said Neither East Nor West-NYC (NENW-NYC, (1) - readers please please read now to understand the rest! NENW-NYC had many chapters but NYC was central as Easterners mostly came here etc.) "emerged as an Anarchist response" to the Maoist Revolutionary Communist Party No Business As Usual front group (I learn it seems that this is a mistake from the *Political Pre-History of Love and Rage* someone penned) - we emerged 'cuz we were NEEDED and a planned follow up from previous groups. In his other article *New Anarchist Federation ...* (p. 8) he goes on about *l&r* with NO criticism. Oops. I guess he didn't know- they were unpopular with some then and HATED later- more comin'.

To start with - I trace the modern modern U.S. @ scene to 1986 when there was a centennial Gathering May 1-4 in Chicago for @'s for Haymarket/Mayday. 300 came (2). Great (of the 3 I went to) yearly Gatherings that grew and took place for 4 years until San Francisco (3) had 3000! Of us. (The other increasingly large Gatherings were in Toronto and Minnneapolis). They had to end - too big. After that there were regional Gatherings and now all kinds of stuff like the book fairs and so on happen. I think the '86 Gathering and the U.S. growth may really have helped spark some of the worldwide @ movement somewhat but I don't know and don't want to be a "U.S. imperialist"...

Anyway a continental zine or "serious" newspaper began to get discussed and at some Gathering about 70 people met to talk about it, but nothing serious came of it.

Down the road then there was more of a meaty discussion of a paper (that included a bit me), and that soonish to be fuker-up Day was super-central, along with the national anti-authoritarian-ish (technically they're defined as "left-Trotskyists" as they broke with official Trotskyism as they gave no support to Communist regimes) soon-to-be X-Revolutionary

mostly "politically correct" sorts (sorry to be mean to the mostly well meaning) but the rest "cool"- a mix of X-RSL, X-RABL, and independents/ more pluralistics like me. (Personally I'm hardly what's come to be known over a long time as "politically correct"- while I'm wild I'm also very pro-organization, "serious"- in the end, hell, people LIKE me and that's important for organizing [well mostly Ha! Ha!]) (4). Like I wanted the paper to be named *Black Swan Courier* [uh oh, I'm a post-surrealist ("post" 'cuz among other things the origi-

Day's suspected Leninism) 30 showed up to help form a production group. Billy chaired the meet. When it got to editorial policy which didn't exist yet Day said he already "*had his red pen out*" and I decided not to take the lead yet again in my freakin' political life but NOBODY said *nothin'*! He shoulda' been slapped around! But fucking lazy assed @'s let him get away with it. THEY were equally to blame for what was comin'. Take personal responsibility ya fools! You reap what you sow ...

Well everyone wanted me to write on the fall of the USSR for the 1st issue and Day played "editor" (the "profession" I hate the most!) and with *no editorial policy* wrecked it. I went to the office and actually yelled at him (NOT my style) and put his authoritarianism in its' place. It caused l&r's 1st nasty scene. My pal Jane from ABC-NY and a founder of NENW-NYC quickly brokered it and I got a shortened by me untouched article in. Of course on p. 3 though when on the cover was about when apartheid was also smashed - they shoulda been twinned on the 1st p. as they were both *historical 1sts* which OGB/ NENW-NYC had a *special in on* (damn, we're in some regular history books!) but l&r had to *fakely* be for Blacks "1st" to be "right-on". Hmm. So those who lived under the most totalitarian state/empire, (1/6th of the Earth's land surface equal to the broken up British Empire) - sorry, not debatable in history - aren't these Easterners grand 2nd class'rs too like apartheid's victims? Another pal Dave from around the @ scene picked up on that "political correctness" right away and said, "See, I told ya" ... (5).

Along the way at a steering committee meet I was at Day wanted the autonomy of the sections taken away as an attempt at centralization and more authoritarian control- he was heavily outvoted. (Part of the original tension in the paper was about pluralizers like me and centralizers like him.) THEN at a yearly meet I didn't make (I always made it clear I was a "sort of" l&r member with much bigger obligations to bike messenger organizing fights, and NENW-NYC/ OGB, but increasingly not to l&r as Day and straight-os took it more over) he and pals sneakily without warning us or the mostly Easterners and Nigerians in the @ Awareness League (and l&r used our international mailing list) as we *promised to print their stuff sent to us* (a freakin' BIG no-no,

extremely important to those more under the gun than us) successfully took out the OGB section. Well that did it. A riot of all sorts broke out. I wrote a long scathing piece for their discussion bulletin (printed) and a scathing letter was printed in the paper protesting which included 5-6 Eastern NENW-NYC members (we all signed) of NENW-NYC. Furious letters came in from around the world and more. Our Easterners wanted to go to a production group meet to protest and demand OGB back, but I said it would do no good. They went anyway so I went too. They were immediately dissed and walked out - WALKED OUT! If it were Blacks, LGBT'rs etc. the l&r's woulda' yelled "NO, COME BACK!" But not in this case as l&r was too blind, Western chauvinist, viewing the whole world through Western, capitalist, imperialist eyes to understand that living under Communism was a special oppression too. Well 5 major @ mags, *Fifth Estate*, *Black Fist* (7), *Anarchy*, *The Shadow*, and *Profane Existence* (in the past also the former RSL's *Torch/La Antorcha* had a former de-facto OGB section too)- so good the fuck by to l&r! (A Bulgarian woman, putting her finger into my chest said "It's the best thing that ever happened to you!")

IMPORTANT NOW PLEASE LISTEN - The l&r office was open to anyone who needed computers to do whatever decent and I had made use of them. I noticed other l&r's would always complain bitterly about Day but I never asked why- I thought it was none of my biz - I shoulda. At one point 4! Were quitten' the production group they told me 'cuz of Day. Good lord. Well kinda around then I had life changes and quit goin' to the office much and the rest is *some* history as Alex Iawasa in that *Slingshot* chronicled from what he knew but *without* criticism- l&r was HATED then (OGB bein yanked was a BIG reason) along with Day who pulled another fast one, getting non-@'s into l&r as a trusted insider maintains who had hung on to the bitter end, as Day went Maoist and the thing ended. Thanx Day.

l&r as far as I can see produced *almost* nothin' and was mostly a useless wreck burning out one good person after the other (well, I believe it was a good attempt on the part of most) - wasting good time as @'s became so big a movement and even important sometimes. Maybe it helped younger people, so good (I'm 59 as of 2015). At



Socialist League (RSL). (AND NO! Please believe me, as I aint no fool [I sniff Staliniods etc. out] the RSL was NO entryist plot into @, I was there, I was THE person to 1st befriend them and did my introducing of some RSLinto @ blah blah- it's a whole article and I shoulda' done it from day 1. Maybe 1 day ... Its' Billy was central (they disbanded just before l&r and the activists in it became @'s and libertarian socialists) plus the Minnneapolis Revolutionary Anarchist Bowling League (RABL, to disband too, Day was a member), some individuals, and a paper AND organization melded. A meeting to do it was finally held after the San. Fran. meet, '89, in Chicago with about 50 people. To generalize somewhat

nals sinned and played footsies with Communists) and damnit a good poet with that awful *imagination thing*- even square Day dug my poems!]- it got *one* vote- mine. Ha! Ha!). So l&r was born. It was an attempt, like the Gatherings, to be continental and l&r had a Spanish section for awhile.

A lot of stuff couldn't be worked out 'cuz of lack of time like editorial policy and so on but the basics were in place like NYC was headquarters, a steering committee (recallable) to be voted on at yearly meetings, NENW-NYC'S OGB and ABC-NY had autonomous pages (and then later the Anarchist Youth Federation). An office was quickly set up and at a NYC pre-meeting of the interested and the suspicious (mostly 'cuz of

the yearly *l&r* meetings I got to there was a 50% turnover- not very healthy. For the life of me I don't know why AK Press printed a not at all good book about them leaving so much out. Forget that book - maybe they just didn't know? ...

I sent this to Day for comment/reply. He doesn't want to so I said this to him (paraphrasing) when he thought interpersonal stuff was a bad way of doing things: "You were too important not to out you - I'm otherwise against personal stuff but you really did a fuked up, undemocratic, dishonest, and sleezy job on things - and you need to be taken to account" ...

Well, that's hardly a ton of things about him and that scene, but a taste of a 1st person account mostly of what I was around for ...

(1) A networking group for East and West cool people: anti-nuke'rs (the movement worldwide at the time, '80's), @'s, greens, "alternative-ists", anti-authoritarian socialists/Marxists, Poland's free trade union Solidarnosc members that hated Walesa's dictatorship - selling them out, doing the Communist Party's bidding in putting out strikes, nixing regional elections (I was there at a meeting when a dude excitedly broke in and reported it) the hip in Solidarnosc lost out, also believing he was at one time an agent (proven true) etc. - feminists, LBGT'rs, etc. and we, with the Workers Solidarity Alliance, unleashed Sam Mbah and his Nigerian @ Awareness League to the @ world (thanks to the old RSL who gave us their address) and more during the Gorby reform period that HAD (read on in the article!) a page in *l&r* of our much loved and successful/historical *On Gogol Boulevard* (OGB- the Boulevard was a Moscow hangout for artists, dissidents, the counterculture etc. (6) that had 5 of its own US issues, 1 double issue, an OGB *Compilation* when we had time/money and then when we got dumped from *l&r* many @ mags picked us up. Also in the RSL's *Torch/La Antorcha* paper was *News From Soviet Bloc* that was de-facto OGB.

(2) A great deal of the promotional news for that 1st gathering was spread by *Popular Reality*, a whacky fun zine tabloid that was full of quite "professional" arty stuff (like poems and other oh-so-brilliant creative writing sent by the braggart and a half me!). It was telling - for the good or bad - not some strictly working class pub. Hmm, interesting for those times.

It was a widespread zine during "the day" - some people getting famous-ish like an old pal Hakim Bey - and still publishes. Send \$3 cash to them at POB 18, Poulney VT, 05764-0081. It's published by my old pal Suzy Poe (sure I'm name dropping again!) who when he was a he was known as Reverend Crowbar. Man, was I surprised when he/she got chopped! Get a copy to see what the zine beginning was like and by someone who refuses modern tech. Good for her!

(3) When I got to the San. Fran. Gathering early there were finally Mexicans in these "continental" meetings. They were all alone in a corner and NO ONE at that great moment was paying them any attention- we made friends, exchanged addresses and so on. One became the lover of a Cuban member of the NENW-NYC, then immigration locked her up, then our lovers eventually broke up blah blah.

(4) In the early @ scene there was an unbelievable amount of gross infighting hatred that I was not at all part of - I was well known and respected by many @'s, bike messenger activists, zine whackos, serious fringe writers/artists/poets ... Not bein' HATED helps, ya know? ...

(5) I won't go into my *plentiful* Black support work so don't dare motherfukin' call me a "racist". I started subbing to the Black Panther paper and met them as an *early* teenager and so on and so on like doing much originally for getting @ x-Black Panther Lorenzo Komboa Ervin into the scene etc., I did my good share of anti-apartheid work blah blah.

One thing that was whack about *l&r* and racism was how the almost all Black homeless who had taken over in the late 80's/early 90's Tompkins Square Park in NYC and had a de-facto alliance with the battling supportive mostly @ mostly white squatter scene all around it and plenty of other @'s like me not from the neighborhood helped. It was top of the news often for years with one MAJOR riot or demo after the other. It was near the *l&r* office (at 1 point as they changed offices) *without much or any word in l&r*. I SCREAMED about this as did Dave Lawrence (also in NENW-NYC) from the scene who was also in the *l&r* production group for a time about this fantastic "racist" diss to Blacks and MAJOR @ history to NO effect. Oh my god ...

The local kick-ass @ paper *The Shadow* covered it all and its editor Flash was one of the

major photographers of it. See Seth Tobotman's great *War In The Neighborhood* comic book book to be re-released Summer/Fall 2016 by Ad-Astra Comix and Shadow Press that tells the story of an extremely important time in U.S. @ history.

(6) Where Did The Name On Gogol Boulevard Come From?

Our title refers to Moscow's Gogol Boulevard, a favorite hangout for the counterculture youth (*Systema* ala "hippie" in Russian), dissidents, anti-war, and human rights activists. On May 3, 1987, this milieu braved poking a hole in Soviet despotism by organizing a small art exhibit/demonstration on Gogol Boulevard. It was met with a violent riot by plainclothes agents, police, and Special Internal Forces Soldiers. On May 4, blood was spilled again with Gogol Boulevard being raided and swept with mass arrests. On May 10 Gogol Boulevard witnessed one of the Glasnost eras first ever youth demonstrations that *openly* called for human rights. Though also repressed, it was a formative event, and we took our name from that week.

See you on Gogol Boulevard!

(7) Defunct @ *Black Fist* was special as it was edited by "minoritys" (personally I just think that word is insulting. But that's another article.) in the mostly white @ scene by Chicano Frank? And a Black dude (name?). They said "minority" readers/prisoners really dug the OGB stuff they had. Jane Bosio who helped form NENW-NYC and was in ABC-NY said a similar thing in that a bunch of letters to ABC-NY from "minority" prisoners sent OGB said they really dug us. That said ALOT about all-white us. *Fist* started as a copied stapled thing that grabbed a good bit of OGB text- we weren't in touch at all at 1st. Then they jumped to a newsprint tabloid that gave us 2 pages and was our largest source of info.

At a large NYC *l&r* meet (yearly meet?) I got to late (ugh! damnit, unheard of by oh-so-great me) 'cuz my heart-was-busted-by-the-girl-that-I-trusted the day before and I was an emotional wreck, I spot this long-hair brown dude and without knowing each other we immediately figured who each other was and hugged in the middle of proceedings. It was *Black Fist* Frank. At lunch we hit it off fast and him, Cuba NENW-NYC Gustavo and his then girlfriend Mexico Anna (Hmm? Was she there then?? Not absolutely sure. Sorry Anna.) *wanted to hang with me and me only* but I

explained what happened to me and I had to go home and cry myself to deathly hell. Shit, too bad. And sheet, am I braggin' agin? U bet! But anyone else from NENW-NYC woulda gotten the same treatment 'cept they were too sick of *l&r* to be there. Again, it said ALOT about us.

For a much more complete and good history (but leaves out most of what I just said and visa versa) of *l&r* from Wayne Price who was around, but not so much personally like me, see - http://www.anarkismo.net/article/5352?search_text=Wayne%20Price

bye now, "good night, and good luck" - prize of pizza and beer and a joint and sex for anyone who knows who that famed reporter quote comes from!

Like I said, see ya on Gogol Boulevard!

"b"oB (yuck yuck) McGlynn, NY
bobnennwog@aol.com

Genes, Cancer and Capitalism

OVER THE LAST THIRTY YEARS MY patients have asked me, as their Family Physician, why they developed cancer. Now I can tell them.

There is no doubt that there is a cancer epidemic in The U.S.A. Cancer is the second cause of death and is rapidly gaining on cardiovascular disease as the leading cause of death. Cancer is a major Public Health Problem in the USA and worldwide. According to the World Cancer Report of 2014 issued by the World Health Organization (WHO), cancer is growing at "an alarming pace" worldwide. The statistics reported in the US are questionable, "Because no nationwide cancer registry exists, there is no way of knowing exactly how many new cases of cancer are diagnosed annually in the United States" (Cancer Journal for Clinicians, Vol.46, No.1, Jan/Feb 1996). The National Cancer Institute reported in 1996 that the incidence of cancer in children increased 10% between 1973 and 1991. The *New York Times* front page article on 1/8/03 reported that the incidence of cancer in children had increased 20% in the preceding 20 years, and for infants less than one year old the increase was 36%! (The children are the canary in the mine.) The International Agency for Research on Cancer, a United Nations Agency (IARC), recently issued a World Cancer Report of 2014. The report stated that cancer

incidence worldwide is forecast to rise by 70% over the next two decades.

Over the last two decades the mass media has been filled with stories about the genetic basis of cancer. So much so that many people now believe that diabetes, cancer and obesity are mostly "Genetic diseases". Such misinformation is essentially blaming the victim for their disease. Yet most people would not say that Influenza, Pneumonia or Ebola are genetic diseases. They comprehend the dialectics of change, acknowledging the primacy of the internal forces over the external forces. There is a general understanding that external agents can overwhelm one's internal natural defense. Not all of us will sicken or die in an epidemic. The major aspect of the "what causes cancer?" propaganda in the media is the fallacy that it is primarily genetic, not environmental in origin. This gross distortion of the reality of recent epidemics such as cancer and obesity, is explained in the article *Obesity Prevention Source, Genes Are Not Destiny-Harvard Public Health* (<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu>). "Genetic changes are unlikely to explain the rapid spread of obesity (or Cancer, my comment) around the globe. That's because the "gene pool" remains fairly stable for many generations.... So if our genes have stayed largely the same, what has changed over the past 40 years of rising obesity?? Our environment..."



The Center for Disease Control (CDC), also confirms the primacy of the environment as a cause of disease on its web site: "Indeed, some rare diseases....may be the result of a deficiency of a single gene product, but these diseases represent a very small proportion of all human disease. Common diseases, such as diabetes or cancer, are a result of the complex interplay of genetic and environmental factors" (CDC Gene-Environment Fact Sheet, August 2000).

The CDC position was clearly substantiated by a huge twin study of 53,666 identical twins, which concluded that the capacity of the genome to predict illness is "not very informative". The results were published in *The Journal of Translational Medicine*. (The Predictive Capacity of Personal Genome Sequencing, March 26, 2014, published April 24, 2012)

Since World War II, our environment has become rapidly more contaminated with toxins. In the book *"The Politics of Cancer Revisited"*, by Samuel Epstein, M.D., 1998, Dr Epstein notes that the production of synthetic organic chemicals skyrocketed starting in 1940, and products from petroleum and natural gas around 1945. Plasticizers and the pesticides were introduced from 1945 through 1955. The CDC lists on its Web site 135 substances considered "to be potential occupational carcinogens" (24/7: saving lives, protecting people,

Occupational Cancer Web site 8/11/14). Very few of the now 80,000 chemicals in use have ever been tested for safety. According to *Scientific American*, July 2014, page 12, "The Toxic Substances Control Act, last updated in 1976 allows industry to use new chemicals *without first demonstrating that they are safe*. Instead it places the burden of proof on the EPA. Yet of the more than 50,000 chemicals used commercially, the EPA has tested just 300."

The world is awash in toxic chemicals. Industrial and agricultural chemical have been polluting ground water serving millions of California for at least 50 years. Millions of tons of cancer causes pesticides have been poured onto agricultural land in the USA and around the world contaminating both food at home and that imported from abroad (David Wir, Mark Schapiro, Circle of Poison, 1981). In the US, the Allied Signal Company produced the insecticide Kepone, related to DDT, and dumped it into the James River Estuary for years in the 1960's and 70's. The James River was closed for fishing for 13 years. The product was banned worldwide in 1990, but the Banana plantation owners lobbied for another 3 years use. Kepone can persist for hundreds of years. In 2003, the Island of Guadalupe restricted the growing of crops due to persistent kepone contamination. Guadalupe has one of the highest prostate cancer rates in the world. More recently, The Duke Energy Company was found guilty of dumping devastating toxic coal ash into the Day River on February 2, 2014. Daily toxic dumping or the so called periodic "accidents" in the US, the European Union and Japan have shown no significant reduction over the last 40 years.

Many toxins have been long known to cause cancer. The link between environmental contaminants and the development of cancer dates back to 1775, when Percival Pott published a study of English chimney sweeps that developed cancer of the scrotum due to soot and coal tar. Some of the more common agents known to cause cancer are: arsenic, asbestos, benzene, formaldehyde, ionizing radiation, soot, radon, hair dyes, non-arsenical pesticides and polychlorinated biphenyls (*Scientific American*, September 1996, What Causes Cancer, page 84). A 2006 study on Hiroshima and Nagasaki Atomic bomb survivors 55-58 years after radiation exposure showed a linear radiation dose response for thyroid tumors and cancer (*Journal of the American Medical Association*, March 1, 2006, Vol. 295, page 1011).

Bob Marley's song *So Much Things to Say*, on his *Exodus* album, summed up our social problem when he sang "When the rain falls it don't fall on one man's house."

The President's Cancer Panel reported that "the true burden of environmentally induced cancers has been grossly underestimated" (Cone, Marla Environmental Health News, May 6, 2010). Dozens of environmental chemical are regularly detected in people. It has been found that women with high levels of PCBs, (polychlorinated biphenyls) or DDT in their blood immediately after giving birth have an increased risk of developing breast cancer (*Nature*, May 29, 2014 Vol. 509, No. 7502, page 17). Furthermore, environmental contaminants have been shown to permanently affect the function of genes. This area of knowledge known as epigenetics has also demonstrated in animals that DDT can cause negative effects in offspring: Harmful chemicals and other agents can permanently alter which genes are turned on without changing any of the genes' code, known as epigenetic changes. "Today, no one doubts that epigenetic effects play a crucial role in development, aging and even cancer" (*Scientific American*, August 2014, page 47).

Industrial interests have a long history of obscuring the long standing scientific knowledge regarding the cancer- environment connection. One glaring example is the issue of ionizing radiation and cancer. In face of overwhelming evidence that nuclear radiation causes cancer, the US Government resisted acknowledging that nuclear plant workers who developed cancer had environmental cancer caused by their exposure to ionizing radiation at work. "After decades of denials, the government is conceding that since the dawn of the atomic age, workers making nuclear weapons have been exposed to radiation and chemicals that have produced cancer and early death" (*New York Times*, Jan 29, 2000, page one). It is presumed that the denials by the Government were the result of pressure by the nuclear industry, and capitalist business in general, to deny any links between Cancer and the Environment. The revolving door of Government officials (E.P.A. F.D.A., etc.) who are later employed by contaminating industry is well documented in the book *"Toxic Deception"* (Dan Fagin, and Marianne Lavelle and the Center for Public Integrity, Toxic Deception 1999).

Even more dangerous for the Future of Public Health is the

collusion between the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). "The WHO has steadfastly resisted conducting studies on the health effects of exposure to uranium 238 following Desert Storm, Bosnia, and Kosovo. The reason for this refusal is an agreement forged in 1959 between the IAEA, which actively promotes nuclear power worldwide, and the WHO, stating that if one agency wishes to carry out a study that affects the work of the other, mutual agreement is required. The IAEA has never agreed to such studies" (Helen Caldicott, *The New Nuclear Danger*, 2002, page 156).

Such agreements which preclude study and responsibility go to the heart of Capitalist Industry. It is part of an active disinformation policy. When the Government did act to curb pollution, it created the EPA and Clean Air Act. The practical functioning of these regulatory organizations is often weakened, underfunded and under enforced at the urging of industry. As stated in *Occupational Health*, edited by Barry S. Levy, M.D. and David H. Wegman, MD, "...the workers' desire for comfort, income, safety, and leisure is continually counterbalanced by the employer's need for PROFIT." The worldwide competition for profit and survival is the dominant practice of business under the present economic order. The consequences are short term profit over the long term safety of the workers and the community at large. Corporate heads regularly responds to criticism of their polluting practices by saying that perhaps business practices could be interpreted

as immoral but they are not illegal. Publicly traded corporations are required by law, to place the financial interest of their owners above everything else including the public good. Clearly the present capitalist economic system is amoral. Lawrence Summers, a Chief economist of the World Bank, encapsulated the ideology of the Captains of modern Capitalism in a memo he sent Dec 12, 1991. "I think the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that." The present economic system, Capitalism, is "a system that fouls its own nest, both the human-social conditions and the wider natural environment on which it depends" (John Bellamy Foster, *Capitalism and the Accumulation of Catastrophe*, Monthly review, December 2011, Vol. 63, No. 7). This truly is the very nature of the beast.

The present cancer epidemic brings to mind a passage from Karl Marx: "When a great social revolution shall have mastered the results of the bourgeois epoch, the market of the world and the modern powers of production, and subjected them to the common control of the most advanced peoples, then only will human progress cease to resemble that hideous, pagan idol, who would not drink the nectar but from the skulls of the slain" (Karl Marx, *The first Indian War of Independence 1857-1859*).

The Propaganda system not only blames the victim for their deficient genetic code but now tell us that cancer is "an unstoppable Killer". The American Medical Association has a

mass mailing of news entitled *AMA Morning Rounds*. The following is a recent quotation from August 22, 2014: "New Research suggests cancer can't be eradicated." They go on to quote from an evolutionary biologist who states "our cells ability to develop cancer is an intrinsic property". Scientific American May 21, 2010, in an article entitled *How Many Cancers are Caused by the Environment?*, states: "But scientists most likely will never be able to tease out the true role of environmental contaminants because environmental exposures, genetics and lifestyle seem to all intertwine." The article then quotes Dr. Clapp of Boston University School of Public Health: "it's an erroneous exercise to try to assign each chemical or exposure a specific fraction of cancer." The acceptance of the epidemic of children's cancer is increasingly entering the cultural domain as TV shows, movies and books are appearing, perhaps to help the public accept the reality of children with cancer.

The Medical Establishment's response to the cancer epidemic is primarily limited to encouraging screening and life style changes. Such screening does not "prevent" cancer. Mammograms and colonoscopy for example are designed to detect early cancer or precancerous changes. They do not prevent the development of cancer in the population in general. Lifestyle changes are unlikely to have a significant ability to combat the cancer epidemic. The Governments Public Health Activities received only 3% of the over Two Trillion dollars the US spent on Health Care in 2009. The

famous Medical Doctor Rudolph Carl Virchow (1821-1902), is reported to have stated that "Medicine is a social science, and politics is nothing more than medicine writ large."

Cancer cannot be prevented under the present economic system of profits before people. In *Capitalism a Ghost Story*, Arundhati Roy writes, "We are not fighting to tinker with reforming a system that needs to be replaced." Only under a system which has as one of its most primary directives, the maximum health of the people, will we be able to prevent cancer. The possibility of defeating the cancer epidemic can exist when society operates under the precautionary principle. "The precautionary principle will be used to evaluate and make decisions on new procedure, production systems, and material as well as to evaluate any chemical used by society to prove safety for humans and the rest of the environment before introduction" (Fred Magdoff, *An Ecologically Sound and Socially Just Economy*, Monthly Review, September 2014, Vol. 66, No.4).

Ending the obfuscation is imperative. We must demand action founded on the scientific knowledge that the environment is the critical factor producing the cancer epidemic. Public Health Organizations, whose responsibility is to protect the health of the entire population by preventing disease, and all Health Professionals, should be vociferously demanding action today, and every day. Tragically, they are largely silent.

October 18, 2014
Nayvin Gordon, M.D.
Oakland, California

Something to Say?

We encourage thoughtful participation in this dialogue!



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Why Are You Reading This Journal?

Mark ☒ all that apply or write in your own answers.

1. I have *Ajoda* because:

- ☐ A. I thought it would look cool on my coffee table
- ☐ B. I want to know what the old straight white male anarchists are up to
- ☐ C. It's the best printed English-language anarchist periodical
- ☐ D. I stole it from my local infoshop

2. My favorite section in each issue is:

- ☐ A. I like the pictures
- ☐ B. There are sections?
- ☐ C. Essays, always
- ☐ D. The survey, of course!

3. If I could change one thing about *Ajoda*, it would be:

- ☐ A. Use smaller words and shorter sentences
- ☐ B. Publish more women, POC, and trans* writers
- ☐ C. Publish more often; once a year? Really?
- ☐ D. Make it free, you fucking capitalists

4. Who should write for *Ajoda*?

- ☐ A. Bernie Sanders, Noam Chomsky, Chris Crass, Cindy Milstein...
- ☐ B. More women, POC, and trans* people
- ☐ C. Barry Pateman; you need a regular feature on obscure anarchist history
- ☐ D. More comics

5. Politically, *Ajoda* is:

- ☐ A. Too extreme; what would you actually do if the state were abolished?
- ☐ B. Racist, sexist, transphobic
- ☐ C. Spot on, as always; post-left anarchy!
- ☐ D. Old news

6. I'd like to see an essay and/or column on:

- ☐ A. The pitfalls and shortcomings of contemporary anarchism
- ☐ B. Creating more effective safe spaces
- ☐ C. More ways to leave the Left behind
- ☐ D. Riot porn centerfolds, please

7. The political tendency most scorned in *Ajoda* is:

- ☐ A. Anything with a realistic chance to create meaningful change
- ☐ B. Anti-Oppression, Anti-Racism, and Anti-Imperialism
- ☐ C. The Left
- ☐ D. Other anarchists

8. If someone asked me if I would recommend *Ajoda*, I'd say:

- ☐ A. Trigger Warning!
- ☐ B. Don't bother; the contributors are all straight, cis male, white supremacists
- ☐ C. Read it all the time so you can leave the Left behind
- ☐ D. FUCK Bob Black!

9. If I wanted to help *Ajoda*, I'd:

- ☐ A. I've heard the editors are insane
- ☐ B. Scold the straight white cis males for not doing childcare
- ☐ C. Run in the other direction
- ☐ D. Use it as kindling for the next burning barricade

10. For the next Survey, I'd like to see answers for:

- ☐ A. What do anarchists do to earn money?
- ☐ B. How racist, sexist, and transphobic are you?
- ☐ C. How reformist are you?
- ☐ D. Doesn't matter; just make it funnier than this one

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Totals	
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12-22	Have you considered joining a union?
23-33	Just because you can fuck shit up, doesn't mean you should. Don't get caught.
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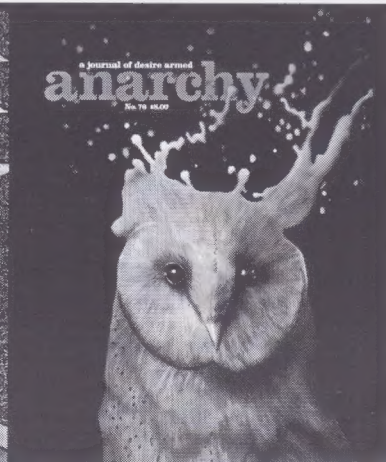
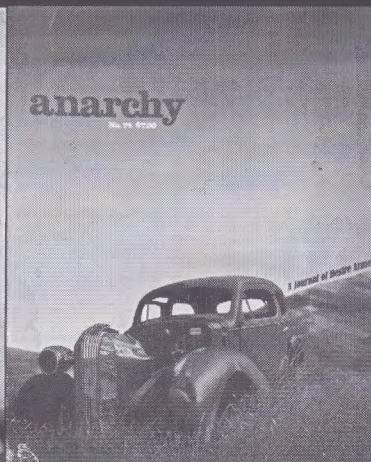
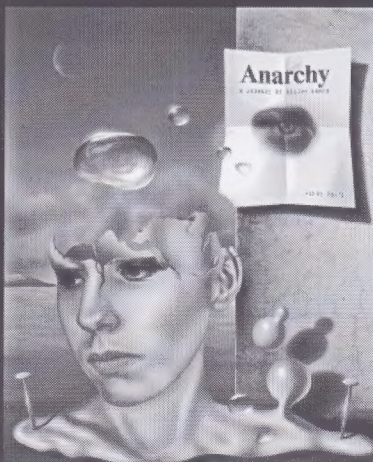
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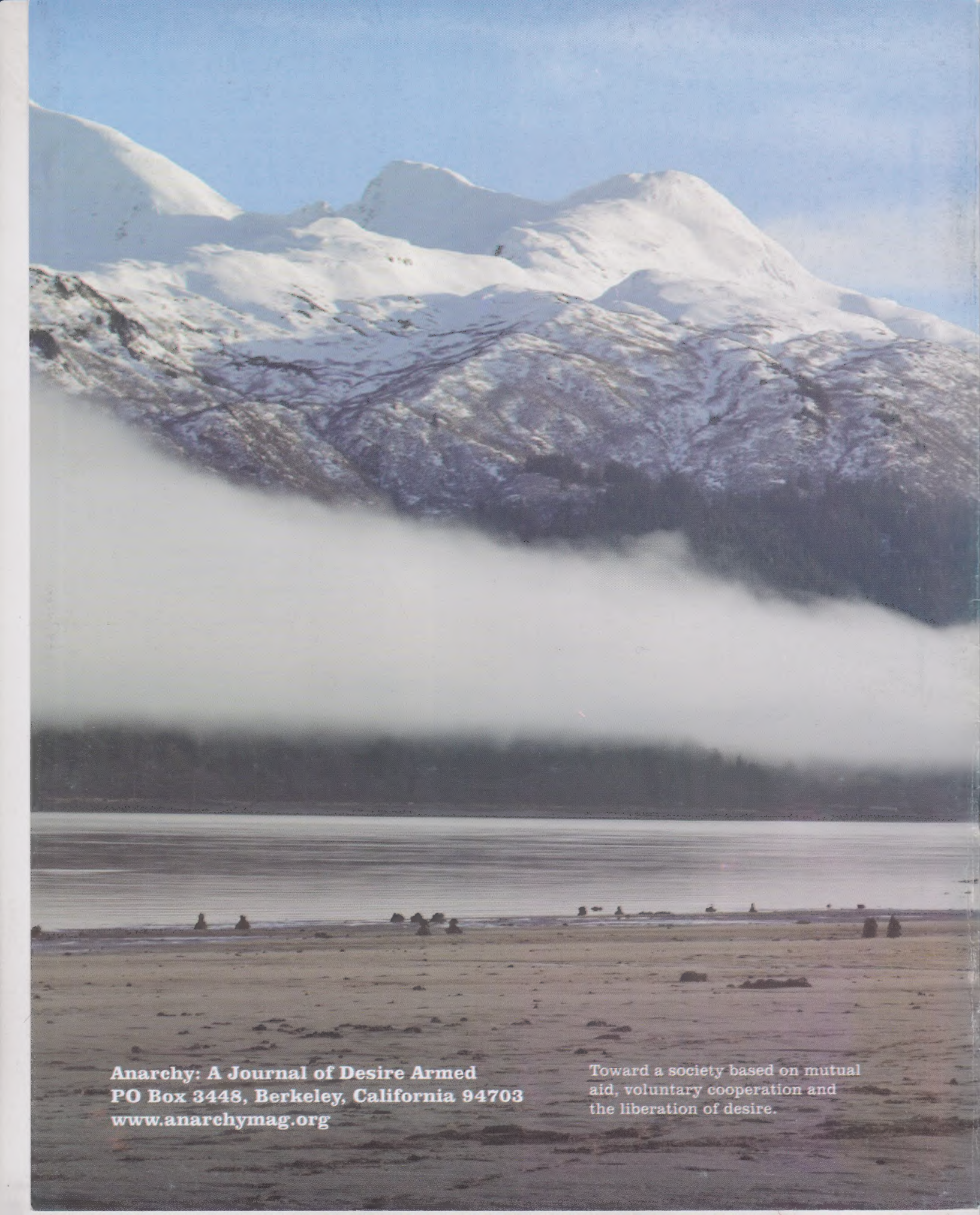
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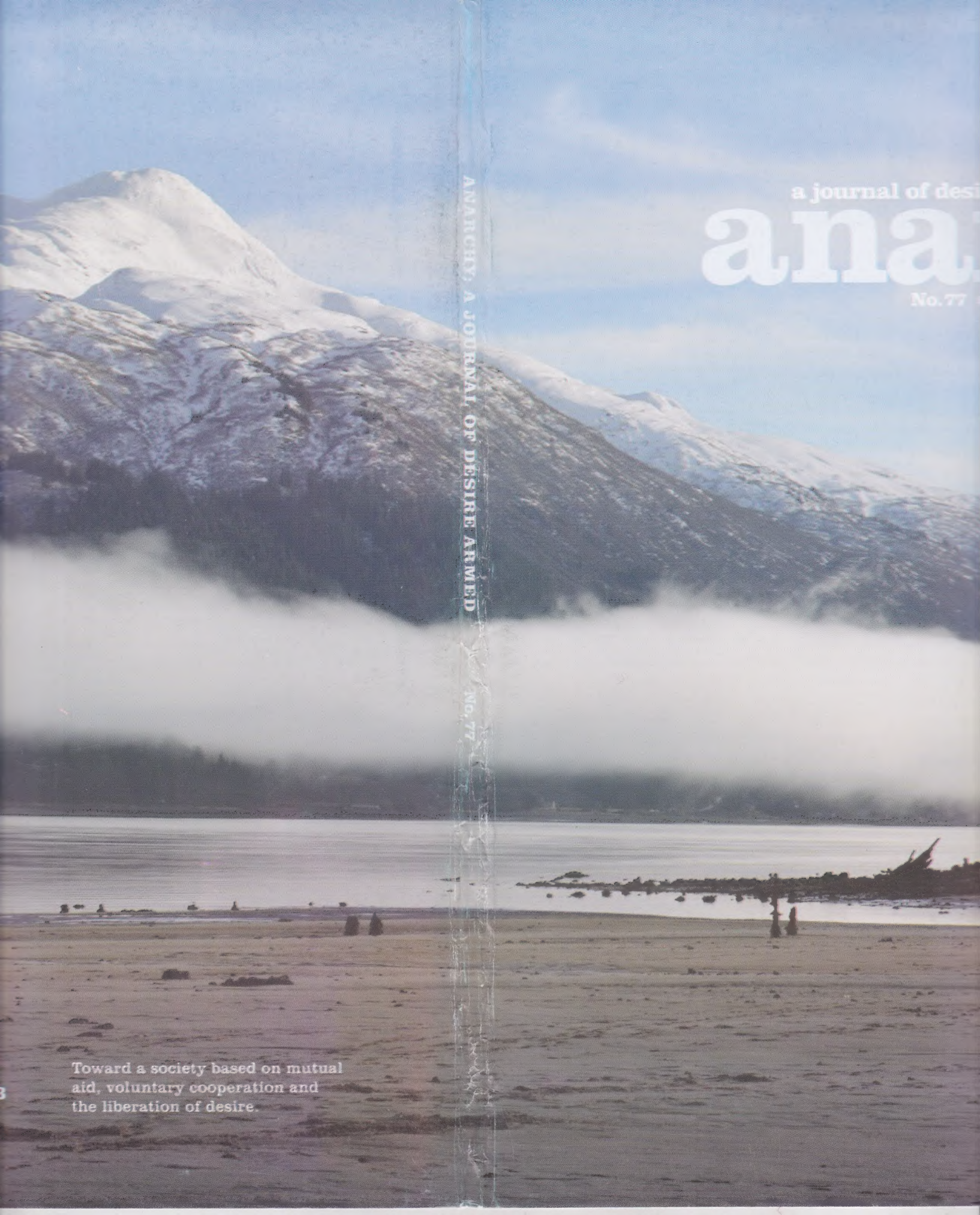
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